OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER™

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO-GEO | SONY

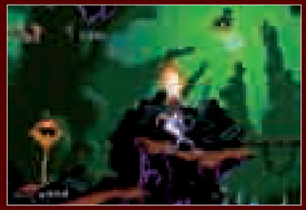
ALIENS

HOW A CLASSIC MOVIE WAS TURNED INTO THE SCARIEST 8-BIT GAME EVER MADE

THE MAKING OF...

EARTHWORM JIM

FIND OUT HOW AN ORDINARY EARTHWORM AND A SPACESUIT HIT THE BIG TIME



WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



DEVELOPER LOOKBACK

SENSIBLE SOFTWARE

JON HARE, ON BOUNCING BALLS, WAR AND CREATING ONE OF GAMING'S MOST POPULAR FOOTBALL FRANCHISES

RETROINSPECTION

AMIGA CD32

DISCOVER THE TRUTH BEHIND AMIGA'S ILL-FATED CONSOLE

CALLING ALL EXPLORERS

ADVENTURE

THE CLASSIC 2600 HIT FINDS A BRAND NEW MOBILE HOME

BARGAIN HUNT

EVERY GAMES MACHINE LISTED

WANT TO START COLLECTING VINTAGE HARDWARE? CHECK OUT OUR COMPLETE LISTING

STREET FIGHTER

FISTS OF FURY

FROM STREET FIGHTER II TO 3RD STRIKE: THE EVOLUTION OF CAPCOM'S SUPERB 2D FIGHTER

FEATURED THIS MONTH IN RETRO GAMER

EXOLON
LOOKING BACK AT RAFFAELE CECCO'S TOUGHEST SHOOT-'EM-UP

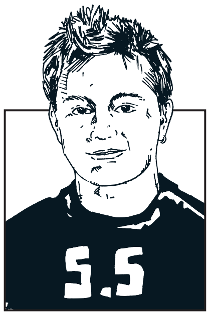
SILENT HILL
ONE OF THE CREEPIEST HORROR GAMES YOU'LL EVER GET TO PLAY

MISSILE COMMAND
LEARN HOW TO SET A NEW HIGH SCORE ON ATARI'S CLASSIC BLASTER

FANTASIA
PERFECT PROOF THAT NOT ALL SEQUELS ARE WORTH WAITING FOR

THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE SOFTWARE COMPANY



SPANNER

They may not have made a million games, but the Bitmap Brothers had music by Bomb the Bass, and that DEMANDS respect. I was totally into the dragon back then!

Expertise:
House music (totally fierce!)

Currently playing: On a Roland TR-808 Drum Machine

Favourite game of all time:
Xenon II: Megablast



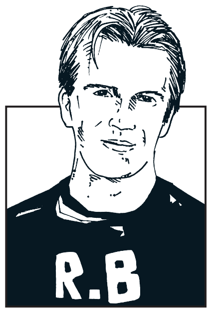
DAVID CROOKES

I adore Codemasters. Responsible for classics such as *Micro Machines*, *Dizzy* and umpteen simulators, Codemasters filled many hours.

Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation

Currently playing:
Wizball

Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



RICHARD BURTON

It's a toss up between Software Projects and Ultimate. SP brought us *JSW* and penguin-based inlay art. Ultimate brought us great games with an air of mystique and great back-stories. I need both!

Expertise:
Spectrum and Amstrad gaming.

Currently playing:
Dynamite Dan (Spectrum)

Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

Konami, because it developed most of my favourite games. The *Metal Gear* series, the *Goemon* series, the *Castlevania* series, *Axelay*, and so many others.

Expertise: Doujin games

Currently playing:
Metal Gear Acid 2

Favourite game of all time:
Trampoline Gunmen



PAUL DRURY

Atari Coin-op. *Asteroids*, *Tempest*, *Star Wars*… it made the Golden Age shine. Its games defined my childhood in the arcades… and Llamasoft did the same at home.

Expertise: Getting programmers to confess their drug habits

Currently playing:
Omega Race

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



MIKE TOOLEY

Favourite software company has to be Sega – it's created some of the greatest gaming moments of all time, yet somehow has managed to do a Pinky and The Brain each time world domination is in its grasp.

Expertise: Games that few have heard of and less have played

Currently playing:
Phantasy Star Universe

Favourite game of all time:
Mr Do!



DARRAN JONES

Easy, it's Sega. *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, *Streets Of Rage 2*, *Golden Axe*, *Shinobi*, *Rez*, *Shenmue*, *Phantasy Star Online*, *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *NiGHTS*, *Jet Set Radio*, *Crazy Taxi*, the hits just go on and on and on.

Expertise: Juggling a wife, two children and Retro Gamer

Currently playing:
Gears Of War

Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



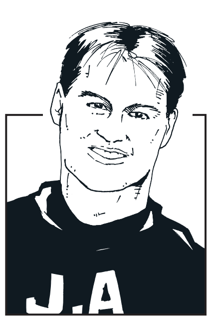
CRAIG GRANNELL

Epyx (before the rot set in during 1988): *Impossible Mission*, the *Games* series and *Jumpman* still enthral today. However, I'm not sure what it was thinking when coming up with *Breakdance*…

Expertise: Games whose controllers don't require you to have 37 fingers

Currently playing:
Head over Heels.

Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



JOHN ANDERSON

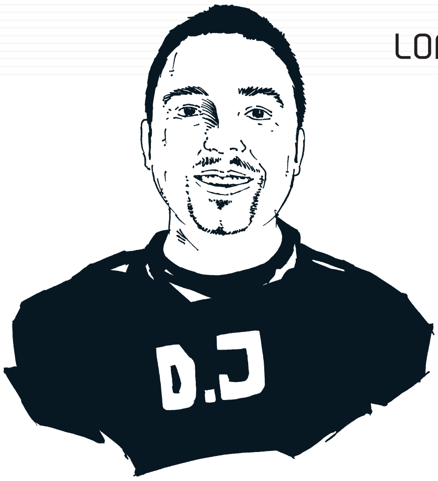
Sega, because its first and second-party development studios delivered on its consumer hardware with the help of Yuji Naka, Tetsuya Mizuguchi, Hisao Oguchi, Kenji Eno, Shinya Nishigaki and Yu Suzuki.

Expertise:
The Asian gaming scene

Currently playing:
Bad Dudes Vs Dragon Ninja

Favourite game of all time:
Illbleed

LOADING...



No doubt you've seen Ken and Ryu on our front cover and are hastily looking through the magazine for lots of tasty *Street Fighter II* coverage. We'll stop you there, as you're not going to find it. Well, you are, but Capcom's *Street Fighter* story doesn't start and end with the admittedly excellent *Street Fighter II* – oh no siree.

Ignoring the criminally bad *Street Fighter*, from page 70, we kick-start our extensive *Street Fighter* coverage with an in-depth look at the original arcade version of *Street Fighter II*. This is followed by an exhaustive look at a title that many gamers feel is the pinnacle of the series: *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*. Yes, it features hardly any of the original *Street Fighter II* cast – only Ken, Ryu and Chun-Li return – and, yes, the new parry system put off stalwarts of Capcom's 1989 classic, but, trust me, this is as good as 2D fighting gets. Hell, it may be as good as it will ever get. Last, but by no means least, is an exhaustive look at every single *Street Fighter* game ever made, meaning that in eight jam-packed pages you're getting plenty of new *Street Fighter* coverage to complement the feature that originally appeared all the way back in Issue 2.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a few of Hugo's special moves to master…

Enjoy the magazine.







CONTENTS

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES

INSIDE

At-a-glance retro sections…





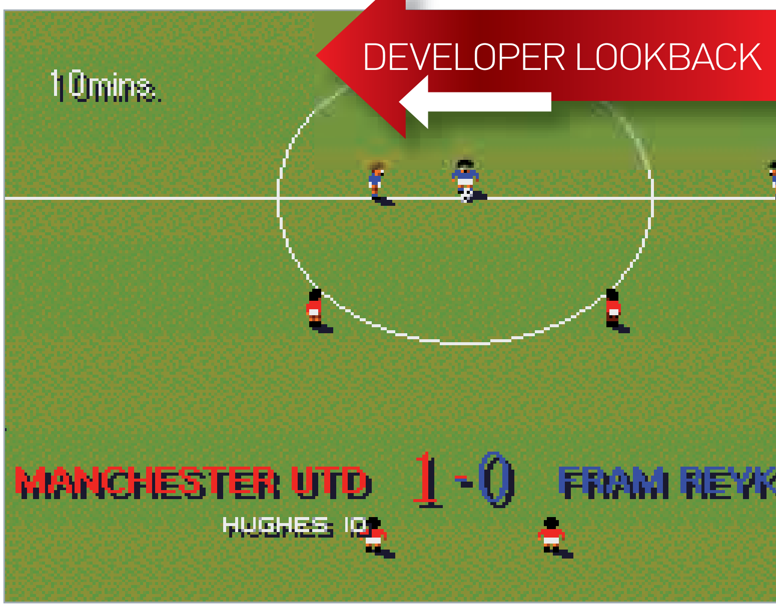




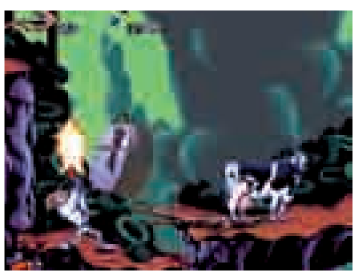
ESSENTIALS

SENSIBLE SOFTWARE

DEVELOPER LOOKBACK



THE MAKING OF…



RETRO RATED

THE GAMES LISTING…

If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, th en Retro Rated is where you'll find it





SUBSCRIBE TO RETRO GAMER

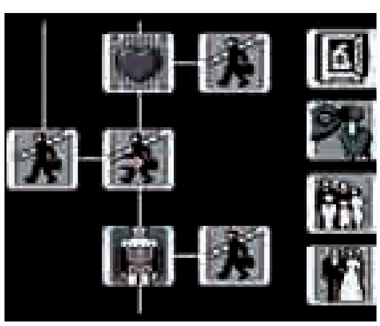
Can't stand the thought of missing the next marvellous edition of Retro Gamer? Then simply head on over to our subscriptions pages and place your order now!

p104



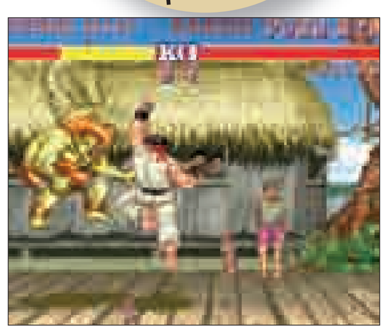
COMPANY PROFILE…

DATA EAST



THE MAKING OF…

ALTER EGO



THE CLASSIC GAME…

STREET FIGHTER II

RETRO SCENE

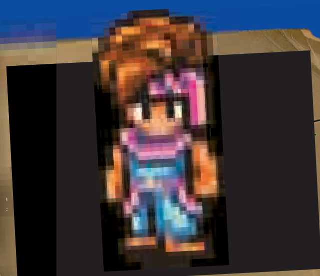
THE GUIDE

What's hot this issue…



There were some excellent surfing sections available to play, which make great use of the Wii controller's motion sensitivity.

HERO OF THE MONTH



RANDI

Every month, Retro Gamer looks back at a classic videogame hero. This month it's the star of *Secret Of Mana*

First appearance: *Seiken Densetsu 2*

Distinguishing features: Followed by a sprite child and spell-casting woman

Weapon of choice: The legendary Mana Sword

Most likely to: Find the Mana Tree and save the world

Least likely to: Appear in the Japan-only sequel

Unusual fact: The characters' names, Randi, Purim and Popoie, are only mentioned in the Japanese manual. Otherwise they can be named as desired.

SONIC ON NINTENDO'S Wii



EXCITING HANDS-ON PREVIEW WITH SEGA'S MASCOT

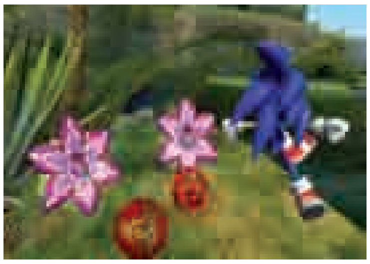
It's early morning and Sega UK's lead PR man arrives at Imagine in secret – there is no announcement as the message is passed silently to n*Revolution's staff that their clandestine meeting is about to begin. There's something exciting brewing and only with an invite can you make it into the mysterious meeting room at the end of a long winding corridor with half-a-dozen security checkpoints. No other magazine is allowed to play or see what's about to happen. Suddenly a head pops round the corner and addresses Retro Gamer's two-man team, "fancy seeing the latest Sega game running on Wii? I've brought playable code." We have a special relationship with Sega, and so were granted access to *Sonic And The Secret Rings* on Nintendo's Wii, due for release in Spring 2007.

It was only a demo, featuring two, full, playable levels, but the wait for our turn was agonising. Even simply watching the game, something is instantly apparent. It looks utterly astounding, with intense speed, smooth animation, brain-liquefying special effects, and, more importantly, one of the most impressive draw distances we have ever seen in a game. One minute we were running through lush jungle and then suddenly we were running along the backs of dinosaurs as the entire level panned out below and in front of us; those in the room witnessing this gave off a collective sigh, such was the visual splendour. It may be true to say that many next-gen titles boast impressive visuals, but it's often only for the five feet where they appear in front of you. Any concerns about the Wii being an enhanced GameCube are unfounded, and seeing this latest *Sonic* title running has eased our minds.

Finally, it was the Retro Gamer team's turn to sample this new wonder. Now, astute readers might be wondering why we're dedicating an entire retro news page to a preview of a modern game, but trust us when we say it's entirely justified. This is the best, most traditional *Sonic* game we've played in years – it takes the series right back to its high speed roots, while perfectly adapting it to the 3D realm and making exceptionally good use of the motion-sensing Wii controller.

Gameplay is seen from directly behind Sonic, but there's no free-roaming exploration like in the *Sonic Adventure* games. The levels are like predefined roads, filled with obstacles to jump over or avoid, various paths and causeways to run down, and also rails to grind along. There are also enemies which can be destroyed with a lock-on attack – the entire system is painless and great fun, with an intelligent camera and decent homing mechanics. The fact that levels are 'on rails' means you can focus on running, much like the earliest *Sonic* games. But, thanks to the incredibly tactile nature of the controls, it never at any point felt like we weren't 100 per cent in control of the action.

You don't actually use the nunchuck attachment, as all movement is directed by the standard controller being held horizontally. Tilt it to the left and Sonic moves in that direction, and vice versa. Pushing the jump button and shaking the pad resulted in a homing dash attack. Most ingeniously of all were catapults and winged jars – you have to pull the pad back to tighten the catapult, while it needs to be gently shook to make the wings flap and generate lift. Pleasingly, everyone found the controls to be very intuitive and surprisingly precise. It honestly felt like the natural way to play *Sonic*. Sega's PR man promised us that there would be secret routes through levels and that the bugs, which we never actually encountered, would be removed.



The enemies have been locked on to – now shake the controller to make Sonic perform a powerful dash attack.

We only sampled the two available levels (several times over), but everyone loved what they saw. If Sega can maintain this momentum, the final product is likely to be something special. We are eagerly anticipating our review copy.



These screens don't really convey what this new *Sonic* is about, or how incredibly well it works. Trust us here. Sega are on to a real winner with this new formula!

LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH

NO 12: CHILLER

Which videogame was first to contain a blood-curdling zombie? And we don't mean the dull kind from computer dungeon crawlers, we mean the kind George Romero dreams about. We debated this for while in the office, but surely *Chiller* was one of the earliest? And the loading screen is pretty damn creepy.



JUST IN THE EBAY AUCTION FOR BBC CHILDREN IN NEED, FEATURING ZELDA ARTWORK AND A SIGNED COPY OF RETRO GAMER, ENDED 19 NOVEMBER AT £142.23. MANY THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO TOOK AN INTEREST.

CHUBBY TANKS AHOY!



METAL SLUG ANTHOLOGY SET FOR BOTH PSP AND WII

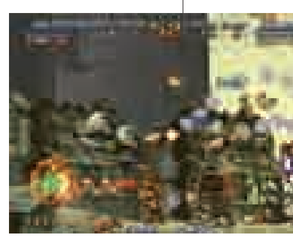
The entire *Metal Slug* series – including the recently released *Metal Slug 6*, which retails for over £40 on PS2 import – is coming to the PSP and Wii. Well, technically not all of them, since the sublime NeoGeo Pocket versions are entirely missing (though we pray they can be secretly unlocked), as is the merely average GBA-exclusive release. What this means is that the entire history of the *Slug* series will be available all at once, for maximum enjoyment. But how many people appreciate the historical importance of this series? Apart from the titular Slug tank resembling Masamune Shirow's *Dominion: Tank Police* designs, the series has a significant lineage. Despite being synonymous with SNK and its Neo-Geo hardware, *Metal Slug* was, in fact, not created by SNK, but rather a little-known group called Nazca, which was formed from ex-Irem members. This is why Irem games – like *Undercover Cop*, *Gunforce 2* and *Kaitei Daisensou* – all bear a distinctive stylistic resemblance to *Metal Slug*. The main driving force behind such exquisite pixel art are two people, know only as Akio (sprites and animation) and Susumu (backgrounds). These two went on to work on other games besides the *Slug* series though, with Akio apparently leaving the team after *Metal Slug 3*. Also, the main guy behind *Undercover Cops* at Irem, a guy called Meeheer, went on to become one of the lead designers at Nazca and then SNK for the *Slug* games. Further confusing things is that a Capcom programmer, Hamachan, left after working on *Street Fighter Alpha* to also join Nazca. This gives the *Metal Slug* series something of an all-star development team, previously responsible for some true arcade classics. We can't wait for the anthology's release.



You and a buddy, back to back, on a boat in the jungle, blowing stuff up. Reminds us of our days in Vietnam.







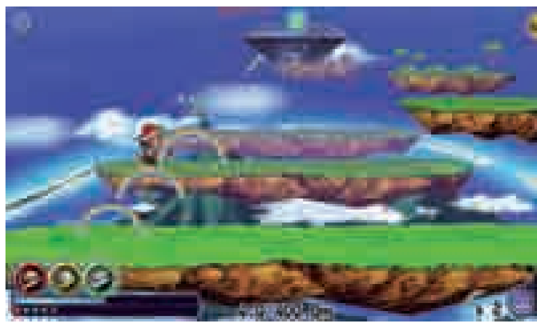
Left: Throw a grenade, blow up a car, and watch as the bodies go flying. There's always a high body count in the *Slug* games. Awesome. **Above:** Aliens in a saucer – fruit flying everywhere, and grotesquely bloated overweight protagonists.

RAINBOW ISLANDS IS COMING BACK

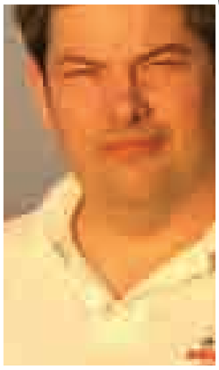
BUT THE REVISED STYLE RAISES SEVERAL CONCERNS

Rising Star Games, presided over by Marvellous Interactive of Japan, previously updated *Bubble Bobble* for the PSP, creating *Bubble Bobble Evolution* which scored 62% in Issue 30 of Retro Gamer, and are now working on an update of *Rainbow Islands*, also for PSP, titled *Rainbow Islands Evolution*. Rising Star Games has already worked with the *Rainbow Islands* franchise, creating *Rainbow Islands Revolution* for the Nintendo DS, which scored 51% in Issue 23 of Retro Gamer.

Tony Byus, the producer for *Rainbow Islands Evolution*, said the following, "We're overjoyed to be updating *Rainbow Islands* for the PSP." He then continued: "We're passionate about keeping the classic gameplay intact, whilst updating and modernising the design without affecting that essential gameplay. In effect, our goal is to produce what *Rainbow Islands* could have been if the PSP's amazing power had been available in 1987." His words are noble, but we have to question the use of crude 3D polygon models over high resolution sprites. Furthermore, looking at Rising Star Games' past record, we're more than a little nervous about how this release will turn out. Let's just hope it follows the standards set by their recent update of *The New Zealand Story* (see page 85) and not the rather poor *Bubble Bobble* games…

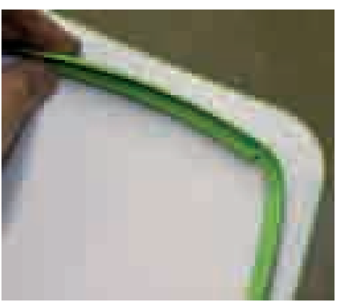


It looks like the traditional *Rainbow Islands* we all know and love, but we're reserving judgement for when we have a copy.





» Extra-thick side-art sheets being applied to degreased side panels.



» Close-up of how I trim t-molding to fit curved grooves.



» Brand new *Galaxian*, circa 2006.



» Close-up on the quality of the result.



» Battersea Dogs Home would turn this away.



» Found with no back door and exposed mains cables.



» Front, back and sides had been kicked to death.

COMMENT

COSMIC SURGERY – A GALAXIAN REBORN

I was fascinated by last month's history of *Galaxian*. It's a landmark from the golden age of arcade cabs, and is famous for being the first game with an RGB colour monitor. For me it's as iconic as *Space Invaders*, and its collectibility is right up there with *Missile Command*, *Asteroids*, *Robotron*, *Pac-Man* and *Star Wars*.

I pumped way too much money into one in the local arcade, and bought a near perfect adaptation for my Atari 800. I played this game on a domestic TV for hours, and it had an interesting side effect on our Persian cat. The cat would sit in front of the TV, and watch everything go left to right, but if a Galaxian peeled off from the main pack and accidentally disappeared off the side of the screen, the cat would jump round the side of the TV and whack the case. Thus proving they see in colour, think spatially, and will attack a TV as much as a sofa.

Anyway, inspired by last month's article, I acquired the *Galaxian* cab as part of a trade, swapping a battered *Defender* for four even worse cabs. The cab was barely standing up, had chunks of wood missing, a non-standard monitor held in by one bolt, a set of original boards that had been jamma'd up to a rusty switching power supply, and plenty of burnt-out wiring mixed with a new loom. Someone had even replaced the fluorescent lamp with two 60W bulbs, which had left scorch marks on the wood. Basically, someone must have been having a laugh deliberately bastardising this cab, and all fingers point to a spangly-suited chap from Manchester who ought to be locked up for crimes against arcade collectors everywhere…

Plus there was all the usual dust, rust, dings, dents, fag burns, screw holes, lock bars, grime, wood worm, mouse crap and some unidentified crap. If the 'A' in RSPCA stood for Arcade machines, then the previous owner would be locked up for cruelty.

When stripping a cab bare I take loads of pics – just in case I forget what order things were in or I break a load of wires off an edge connector etc. The insides were sanded back to clean wood, but with so much internal damage I then decided to coat them matt black. The inside panels above the monitor were sprayed a uniform satin black, as were the front side and top vertical areas between the green t-moulding and white artwork.

Luckily, for once, an American friend of mine had already spent some 50 hours recreating a precision art file for *Galaxian*, saving me that trouble. I have the machinery and gadgets needed to precision colour match to an original, and print the huge side art sheets at 600 DPI, coat with a scuff-proof polymer, and apply strong adhesive backing sheets. There's considerably more to this than I have the space for here, but the resulting art is sufficiently stiff and scuff-proof that it can be unrolled and applied with no air bubbles,

"I PUMPED WAY TOO MUCH MONEY INTO ONE IN THE LOCAL ARCADE, AND BOUGHT A NEAR PERFECT ADAPTATION FOR MY ATARI 800" ARCHER MACLEAN

I thought I'd share some pics from one of my old restorations projects. I'd like to show all 100+ pics of how this pile of crap started out, and every restored part. Most photos are 8mp, so the detail will be lost in the few pics here. However, some of my extensive restorations and artwork reproductions are featured on various arcade web pages and well worth a look.

I decided that it needed more than a face lift, and major surgery was the only hope. So I set about doing a drastic strip down: sand the entire thing, create and apply totally new laminate side and front artwork, coat the insides black, rewire it, and renew all metals. It also needed a new RGB monitor, new marquee, new lights, new bezel, new control panel overlay, new loom, and so on.

and covers up much of the cab's wood imperfections. However, before applying, I usually degrease it entirely with fine wire wool, fill and prep all dings and clean again before applying the art. This time around I also did the front art, and even covered the top with matching plain-white sheeting.

I had to recreate from scratch a 'full wrap' control panel overlay, and also the screen



» New back door and restored innards

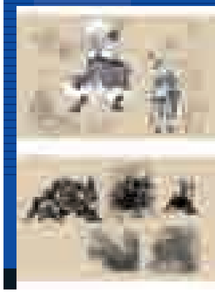
bezel. The final bezel print was sandwiched between two bits of 3mm glass and a layer of tinted f theatrical lighting gel – the sheets used for colouring a stage flood lamp. This works well because it's thick, won't wrinkle, and takes a lot of heat. This all goes to hide the plastic screen surround and dim the screen area for a better look.

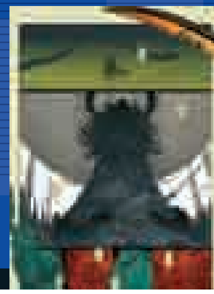
The metal control panel and coin door were sand-blasted back to bare metal, zinc-primed and then powder-coated. I get a local car restoration place to help out with this part. The loom was removed and tidied up. Someone had snipped much of the original, and inserted a new jamma spinal cord in. But, as is so often the case with these people, they'd left everything unused just hanging loose right next to bare mains cables. They'd also used a single nail to attach a switching PSU to the cab base so it was flopping about as the cab was moved.

The monitor was an implosion waiting to happen. The original was long gone and had been replaced with a tired narrow non-standard one that didn't fit the mounts. So someone had welded some spare bits of sheet metal to the metal surround and slid it into place, holding it in position with a single bolt. How this didn't snap I don't know. Many people move cabs in estate cars by laying them flat on their backs, and in this case the monitor would have smashed itself to pieces. It's lucky I checked.

Cost to do all this? Probably thousands more than I want to work out, but in hour terms alone it's about 120 hrs all told, including the art reproduction. The final result can be seen in the pics. Anyone who's seen it reckons it's been unpacked from a time warp. It was a hell of lot of work, but fun. The artwork quality is probably better than the mass-produced original and will outlast the wood it's covering.

Most people would say you 'can't polish a turd', but, in this case, I think I managed it, producing a minty-fresh-looking cab that's good for another 27 years. It's now invading a space between my *Lunar Lander* and *Asteroids*. ARCH





» Here are some sample pages from the manga, with more available online at DGN's website.

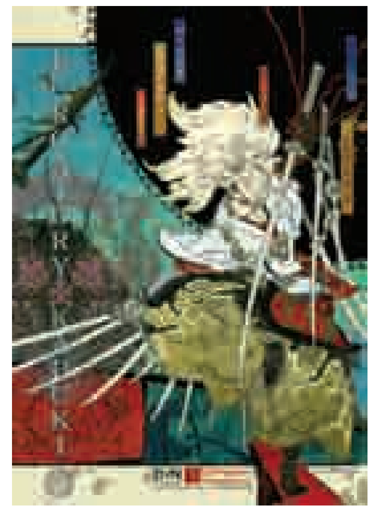


IKARUGA ARTIST CREATES EXCITING NEW MANGA

MAIN CONCEPTUAL DESIGNER AT TREASURE, D-SUZUKI, BRANCHES OUT



» Look at the delicate and ornate brush strokes. There is nothing quite like the Japanese ukiyoe style of art. It is utterly breathtaking.



» The art style is D-Suzuki, and it takes us back to our days of living above a Tokyo ramen shop, playing Treasure games.

Brought to Retro Gamer's attention by our comrades at InsertCredit.com, the internationally acclaimed Treasure designer Yasushi Suzuki (aka: D-Suzuki) is creating an original Manga publication, by the name of Purgatory Kabuki. It's not strictly games news, but if it's connected to the illustrious and glorious Treasure, the people behind *Gunstar Heroes* and *Guardian Heroes*, it simply must be given coverage!

Suzuki-san has worked on Treasure games such as *Radiant Silvergun*, *Sin & Punishment*, and *Ikaruga*. The storyline, also by Suzuki-san, is pure awesomeness, as the official synopsis explains: "Purgatory Kabuki is a non-stop samurai action story set in the underworld, or Japanese afterlife. For reasons unknown, former samurai Imanotsurugi is obsessed with leaving the afterlife. To die in battle is a samurai's greatest honor. Yet now, Imanotsurugi must claim 1000 swords from the fallen warriors who share residence in this dark underworld. By these and these means alone, this highly skilled blades master will be allowed admittance back into the living world. But to what end? Upon what stone purpose does he sharpen his edge? His only enlightenment comes by way of a violently powerful but adorable guide named Enishi. Demons, Oni, magical denizens, supernatural ninja clans and more are met with blades and stylish action!" An ornately woven narrative combined with the brushwork of Suzuki-san, it makes us weep tears of joy.

Sadly it's not yet been confirmed for release in the UK. Originally there was an announcement of it being serialised in fantastic American multi-format magazine Play, but while the December issue contained a page-and-a-half exclusive first-look preview, there was no sign of the planned serialisation. There are apparently two volumes, with the first being published in America sometime in 2007, by DGN/DRMASTER. The Marketing Director and Project Lead for DGN, Shawn Sander, said the following, "Suzuki-san is an accredited conceptual designer, animator and graphic artist who is incredibly well known for his work in videogames; he's one of Japan's most innovative creative talents. We are so very proud to bring a work with such intensity. We are truly honoured! His enthusiasm, keen eye and flare for action planning is sure to astound you, as it has us. The story borrows heavily from various Japanese legends and myths – a skillfully mixed bag of action, suspense, intrigue and classic ukiyoe style art!"

For further info check out www.dgnproduction.com and www.drmasterbooks.com – or pester a local bookstore to import and stock it!

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH



KEFKA PALAZZO

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH

Without a bad villain there would be no good heroes. What would the Ninja Turtles be without Shredder? What would Wolverine be without Sabertooth? Rubbish, that's what. This month: Kefka Palazzo

First Appearance: *Final Fantasy VI*

Distinguishing Features: Maniacal laugh

Weapon of Choice: Magitek

Most likely to: Plunge the world into ruin

Least likely to: Nurture injured puppies

Unusual fact: Kefka is one of very few villains to accomplish his goal of destroying the world

retro GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO…

EVENT HOSTING retro GAMER
IF YOU WANT RETRO GAMER TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

Just because Retro Gamer looks to the past that doesn't mean that there aren't games and events to look forward to. Every month we'll be listing suitable games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list.



JANUARY 07

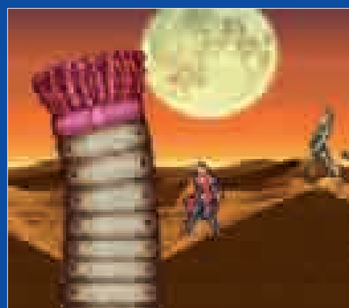
GAME ON

Starts: Now

Location: London Science Museum

Admission: £8.50 adults, £6.50 Children

There's no excuse to not visit Game On, as the show will be staying at London's Science Museum until February. Along with scheduled speakers, including a great many gaming celebrities, you'll find a nostalgia-inducing range of classic arcade games and more consoles and computers than you can shake a joypad at. This is one event that you do not want to miss, so head on up to London as soon as possible.



FEBRUARY 07

CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN

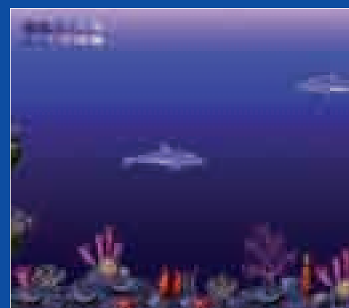
Released: 23 February

Publisher: Konami

Price: £29.99

Format: NDS

While it has been available in Japan for a while now, we're going to have to wait a little longer before we get to enjoy the latest *Castlevania* title. With its brand new setting (WWII) and the ability to switch between the two main characters at will, this is looking like a worthy follow-up to *Dawn Of Sorrow*. Don't let us down Konami.



FEBRUARY 07

MEGA DRIVE COLLECTION

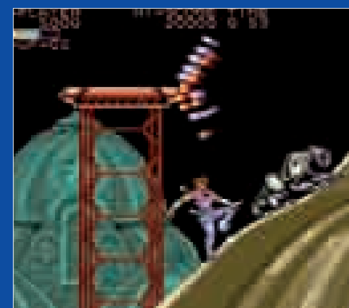
Released: 23 February

Publisher: Sega

Price: £19.99

Format: PS2/PSP

If you listen very carefully you can hear us munching down on a rather large slice of humble pie. Now that we've actually played Sega's *Mega Drive Collection*, we can safely say that it's one of the best compilations we've ever had the pleasure to play. Filled with beautiful presentation, great games and seemingly hundreds of extras, this is a Sega fanboy's wildest dream on one handy disc.



FEBRUARY 07

CAPCOM CLASSICS COLLECTION VOL 2

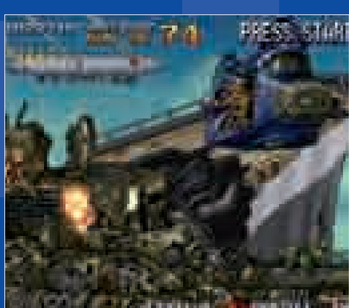
Released: 02 February

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £19.99

Format: PS2, Xbox

So then, Capcom's second PS2 and Xbox compilation contains all the games that featured on the first PSP compilation that hadn't been included on the first PS2 compilation, as well as all the games from the second PSP compilation that didn't already appear on the first PS2 compilation. Confused? Because we are. Still, here's a pic of *Strider*. Yay!



MARCH 07

METAL SLUG ANTHOLOGY

Released: 30 March

Publisher: Ignition

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP, Wii

It's somewhat disappointing that the release of this potentially excellent compilation has now slipped, but when you consider that it's so SNK could include the recently released *Metal Slug 6* it becomes much easier to deal with. So then, seven *Metal Slug* games all crammed onto one shiny UMD or Wii disk. How could any self-respecting gamer not be looking forward to that? We certainly are.



MARCH 07

METAL SLUG 1

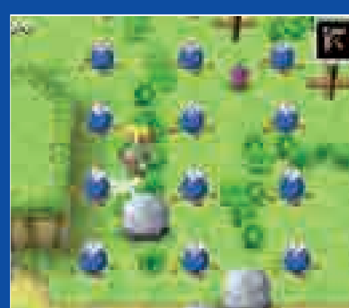
Released: 23 March

Publisher: Ignition

Price: £29.99

Format: GBA

More *Metal Slug* shenanigans, but this time it's just the original game and it's being ported to Nintendo's Game Boy Advance. In the past we'd have been a little concerned about SNK's premier franchise heading to the GBA, but after witnessing the superb *Metal Slug Advance* we have no worries. Providing the gameplay matches the impressive visuals, this could well be one of the GBA's last hurrahs.



MARCH 07

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS

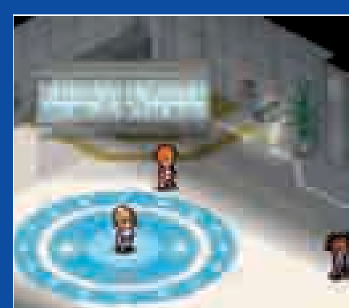
Released: March

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Aarrghh, one of our most anticipated DS titles has slipped to next year. While *Phantom Hourglass* features a similar graphical style to *The Wind Waker*, it's set to make full use of the DS's unique abilities and will allow for competitive play against another DS owner. With everything from Link's movement, to combat being controlled by the stylus, this could well be the most unique *Zelda* yet.



MARCH 07

SNK VS CAPCOM: CARD FIGHTERS

Released: March

Publisher: Ignition

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

As great as the original *Neo Geo Pocket Color* version was, we're expecting the DS outing to be even better – mainly due to the fact that it will be fully controlled via the stylus. It's unclear whether there will be two different versions, or if it will be a direct port of the original. Providing that SNK Playmore don't mess around with the play mechanics too much, DS *Card Fighters* has the potential to be huge.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES



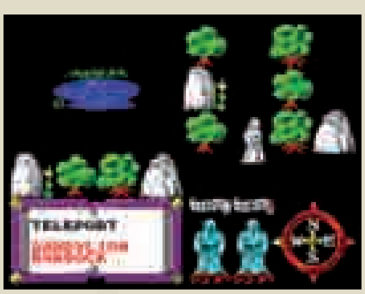
Happy New Year – it's 1987! Mastertronic are still grumbling, Beyond are beyond belief, the first age-restricted game appears, LM launches and Dirk is back plus one last Magic Knight. Richard Burton grabs himself a big stick and prods January 1987…

THE LATEST NEWS FROM JANUARY 1987



Mastertronic was once again in the news after announcing the forthcoming launch of a new subsidiary software label to its range. The new label, called Bulldog, would feature a range of arcventure and strategic style games. The first title planned for release was *Feud*, which would be available on most popular 8-bit formats before the end of the month.

However, the news flow didn't stop there for Mastertronic. The long-running saga of Mastertronic's presence in the Gallup Software Charts, or lack of, in recent months, had once again reared its budget-priced head.



» *Feud* (Spectrum): The first release from new label Bulldog and superb for £1.99.

In the previous few months Mastertronic was disappointed that not all retails outlets that stocked its software were being included in the Gallup poll, which formed the software charts. This included major stockists like Woolworths and Toys R Us; Mastertronic said this led to a misrepresentation of what was actually selling well and it was convinced it should be a lot more prominent than it actually was.

Gallup agreed that Mastertronic sold through a wide variety of outlets and could not be represented with 100% accuracy in the software charts. However, further outlets were to be included in the equation in the future.

What particularly irritated Mastertronic was that its market share was perceived to be below what it actually was. Gallup, for the first week of December, estimated that 2 million games were sold in the UK, with Mastertronic accounting for around 10% of total sales.

Mastertronic argued that an estimate of 2 million was far too high and that average total software sales were nearer to 400,000 units per week. They did concede that this would potentially double during December, but would still be well short of Gallup's estimations.

Mastertronic also claimed its own UK sales for December were coming in at around 200,000 units per week and that its market share should be significantly higher. With this taken into consideration, Mastertronic was considering serving a writ to Gallup for damages.

January saw further software news with the announcement of the Christmas sales figures. The figures indicated that the large software houses were continuing their domination. Only the big boys of the gaming industry got a look in, with US Gold, Elite, Ocean, Imagine, Firebird and Mastertronic governing the chart (although Mastertronic says otherwise).

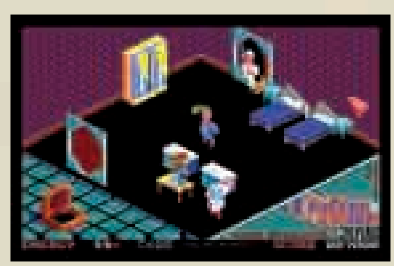
It seems that the time of small, independent software houses with the surprise hit were a thing of the past. The days of companies like Blaby, Abbex, Mikro-Gen, Automata and suchlike had seemingly gone.

Get Dexter, an Amstrad CPC all time classic game, was touted to be converted to various other formats including the Spectrum, C64 and Atari ST. ERE Informatique, the French software house who developed some highly original software for the Amstrad, revealed it had agreed a distribution agreement with Infogrames to convert various games to other formats. The superb *Get Dexter* was top of the conversion list, but eventually only made the jump to the Atari ST with other conversions left uncompleted.

Another game suffering the ignominy of a long drawn out development was the official *Star Trek* game from Beyond. The company, which had been bought by Telecomsoft the previous year, still could not agree on a release date for the eagerly awaited and highly anticipated game.

Beyond were also avoiding talk about the development of the proposed third part of the *Doomdark's* trilogy. Both *Lords Of Midnight* and *Doomdark's Revenge* were firm favourites amongst gamers and had sold extremely well across all formats. Therefore, you would naturally assume the third part, entitled *Eye Of The Moon*, would be an absolute dead certainty for development and release. If you did, you would be severely disappointed…

One piece of software definitely finished, and on its way from Mr Singleton, was *Throne Of Fire*, although this would be released in the coming



» *Get Dexter* (Amstrad): Gloriously colourful, superbly playable and French of origin. Two out of three ain't bad.



» *Throne Of Fire* (Spectrum): Great in two-player mode, but far too easy as a one-player game.

months by Melbourne House rather than Beyond. Software Projects proudly publicized that the sequel to its fairly average game, *Dragon's Lair*, would be available to buy before the end of January. *Escape From Singe's Castle* sees you once again taking on the role of Dirk, and, no doubt, getting killed very quickly lots of times without much progression.

CRL revealed that its latest creation, a graphical text adventure called *Dracula*, would be the first computer game in the UK to receive an age restriction, due to some of the explicit descriptions used in the game, as well as the blood-splattered graphics. The British Board of Film Classification awarded *Dracula* a 15 certificate. Rod Pike, the monstrous mind behind the game, later followed *Dracula* with two more censored titles, *Frankenstein* and *Wolfman*.

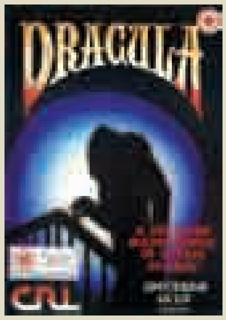
But were these blood-soaked games really that distasteful to warrant a 15 certificate or was it all just a cunning marketing ploy to get as much free advertising as possible… hmmm… scratches chin…

David Jones, the creator of the Magic Knight series, and not the pocket-sized singer from The Monkees, revealed the background for his final game in the arcventure series. It would feature a battle between Magic Knight and his evil alter ego, The Off-White Knight. Whilst taking a journey in a faulty second-hand time machine, Magic Knight became split into the two separate entities. His task is to reunite his two halves.

The new game would be called *Stormbringer* and, again, would be released by Mastertronic, who also released the previous three games, *Finders Keepers*, *Spellbound* and *Knight Tyme*.

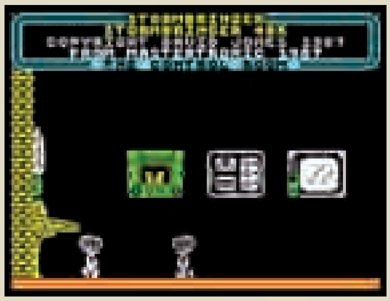


» *Escape From Singe's Castle* (Spectrum): Dirk takes a break from fighting monsters by throwing some shapes down at the medieval roller disco.



» **Left:** *Dracula* (Spectrum): 15 rated and full of gore? Well, no actually. Good marketing ploy though…

» **Below:** *Stormbringer* (Spectrum): And it's good knight from me and good knight from him. Magic Knight bids farewell. Knight knight!

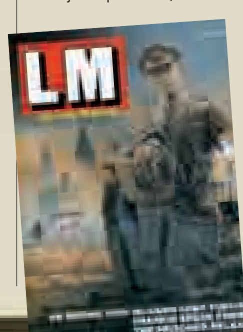


At the newsstands, complimentary copies of a new magazine from Newsfield Publications, entitled LM, were given away free with their computer magazine range. The first issue proper came out towards the middle of the month. LM was a magazine covering topics of general interest for a young adult readership. It was certainly a different angle for Newsfield to take.

The first issue embraced a wide-ranging selection of subject matter stretching from a feature on Russ Meyer to an article entitled, Members Only, about whether the size of a bloke's todger makes a difference in bed. According to one girl interviewee, "Size doesn't matter. I mean, if I'm turned on enough, I could cope with a tree-trunk". Nice girl apparently…

Although the varied content and the typically good Newsfield design should have made for an interesting magazine, LM lasted just four issues before being axed.

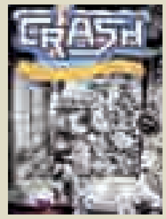
For magazine enjoyment overload, there was nothing quite like a Christmas/January edition of Crash, Zzap! and Amtix was there? Stuffed to the gills with competitions, reviews and general silliness, the jam-packed, end-of-year magazines, were always highly anticipated. They made running down to the newsagent at 7.30 am on day of



» **Left:** LM, the new magazine from Newsfield, survived for four issues in total. Even the old RG lasted longer than that…

THIS MONTH IN…

Crash Flash



Issue 36 saw a black and white pen-and-ink drawing featured a host of creepy crawlies from *Bug Box*. A really nice cover. Inside there was an interesting feature on the rumoured break-up of software house Denton Designs.



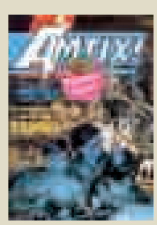
Zzap! Back



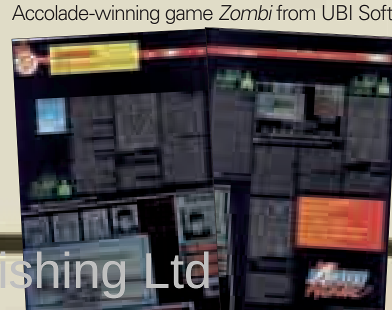
Zzap!64 featured a selection of their reviewers, including Penn and Rignall. In it they are seen reading from the very magazine they are featured on. Nestling inside was a desert island disks style article focusing on 11 C64 programmers.



Amtix! Antics



The cosy Christmas cover featured the four Amtix guys of Eddy, Valducci, Harding and Clarke settling down on the sofa for a quiet game on the CPC whilst a zombie crashes through the lounge window, in a nod to Accolade-winning game *Zombi* from UBI Soft.



CHARTS

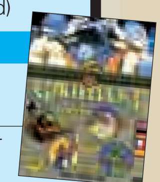
JANUARY 1987

AMSTRAD



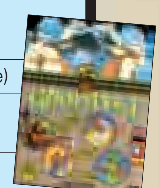
1. Five Star Games (Beau Jolly)
2. Gauntlet (US Gold)
3. Computer Hits 10 Volume 3 (Beau Jolly)
4. Bombscare (Firebird)
5. Booty (Firebird)

SPECTRUM



1. Gauntlet (US Gold)
2. Space Harrier (Elite)
3. Ollie & Lissa (Firebird)
4. Footballer Of The Year (Gremlin Graphics)
5. Paperboy (Elite)

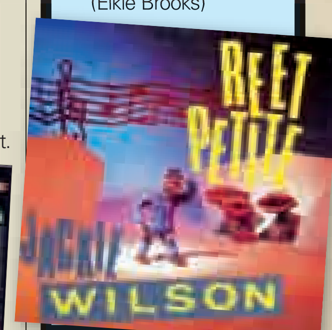
COMMODORE 64



1. Gauntlet (US Gold)
2. Paperboy (Elite)
3. Super Huey II (US Gold)
4. Space Harrier (Elite)
5. Konami Coin Op Hits (Imagine)

MUSIC SINGLES CHART DEC '86

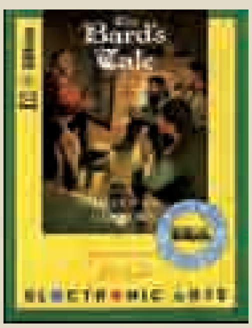
1. Reet Petite (Jackie Wilson)
2. Is This Love (Alison Moyet)
3. Big Fun (Gap Band)
4. Jack Your Body (Steve "Silk" Hurley)
5. No More The Fool (Elkie Brooks)







» Messrs Eddy, Penn, Stone, Dunn, Valducci and Rignall line-up for the Reviewers Challenge… or possibly *Crime Watch UK*.



» Once upon a time practically every new release from Electronic Arts was something to look forward to…

release seem like an annual pilgrimage. One feature that saw publication in all three editions was the inter-magazine Reviewers Challenge. Two reviewers from each magazine played two games each on the Spectrum, Amstrad and C64, so as not to favour any one computer and keep everything fair. The major surprise was that the overall winner wasn't Julian Rignall, but Ben Stone, representing Crash.

Although it may have had 196 pages and untold literary riches inside its New Year pages, Zzap!64 severely struggled to provide us with any games worthy of an award. However, there was one solitary little Sizzler and that was *The Bard's Tale* (Electronic Arts/Interplay).

We assume the software houses were saving their good stuff for the Easter holidays or were still partially comatose due to excessive festive eggnog slurpage and figgy-duff consumption. Needless to say, there was no Gold Medal awarded either.

Two near misses worthy of a mention were *Super Huey II* (US Gold) and *Flash Gordon* (Mastertronic) both scoring 89% but both marginally missing out on a big fat cigar.

In comparison, there was Smashness abounds at Crash Towers with a plethora of gaming goodness to while away the wintry nights. The Smashes went to *Starglider* (Rainbird), *Nosferatu The Vampyre* (Piranha), *Contact Sam Cruise* (Microsphere), *Artist II* (Softechnics), *Jewels Of Darkness* (Rainbird/Level 9) and *Academy* (CRL). Amstradians had a quartet of Amtix! New Year Accolades to drool over, them being *Heartland* (Odin), *Zombi* (UBI Soft), *Thanatos* (Durell) and *Bobby Bearing* (The Edge).

Computer & Video Games plumped for *World Games* (US Gold/Epyx, C64) and *Academy* (CRL, Spectrum) as their Games of the Month.

C&VG reviewers went into generosity overdrive when it came to awarding their C&VG Hit awards, with 19 games gaining their stamp of approval. The list read: *Ikari Warriors* (Elite, Amstrad), *Starglider* (Rainbird, Spectrum), *Dandy* (Electric Dreams, Spectrum), *Trailblazer* (Gremlin Graphics, Amstrad), *Gauntlet* (US Gold, Amstrad), *Aliens* (Electric Dreams, Spectrum), *Tarzan* (Martech, Spectrum), *1942* (Elite, C64), *Flash Gordon* (Mastertronic, C64), *Repton 3* (Superior, BBC), *Los Angeles SWAT* (Mastertronic, Atari), *Sentinel* (Firebird, BBC), *Kettle* (Alligata, C64), *Powerplay* (Arcana, Amstrad), *Super Huey II* (US Gold, C64), *Dr What!* (CRL, Spectrum), *BMX Simulator* (Codemasters, C64), *Yie Ar Kung Fu II* (Imagine, C64) and *Bazooka Bill* (Melbourne House, C64).

1987

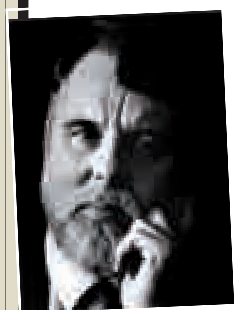
JANUARY 1987 NEWS

Terry Waite, envoy to the Archbishop of Canterbury and hostage negotiator, was himself taken hostage on the 21 January in the Lebanon during hostage negotiations. He was released, over fours years later, on 17 November 1991.

22 January saw the infamous suicide of R Budd Dwyer, State Treasurer for Pennsylvania, on live TV during a press conference. Having been found guilty of fraud and bribery in helping a company gain a lucrative contract, the expectation was he would receive a lengthy prison sentence and substantial fine. However, many believe he was set up by his political enemies…

The day before sentencing was due to commence Dwyer called a press conference "to provide an update on the situation". After reading a prepared statement reiterating his innocence and expressing his disappointment, he handed out several envelopes containing copies of a suicide note. He then reached for a large manila envelope containing a .357 Magnum handgun informing the gathered news-crews, "Please leave the room, if this will… if this will offend you".

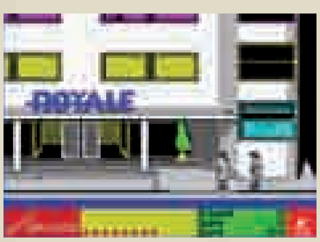
In front of a large press conference and live TV audience, he put the gun in his mouth and pulled the trigger. While panic ensued, the cameras kept filming…



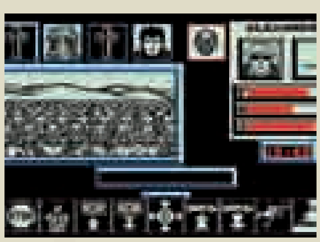
» Humanitarian, envoy, hostage negotiator, public speaker and all round good guy, Terry Waite, also worked in Netto on Thursday mornings.



» *Super Huey 2* (C64): Get your chopper out and lose it in the Bermuda Triangle.



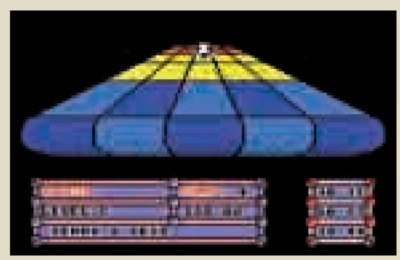
» *Contact Sam Cruise* (Spectrum): The world's smallest big-time detective or a very small sprite?



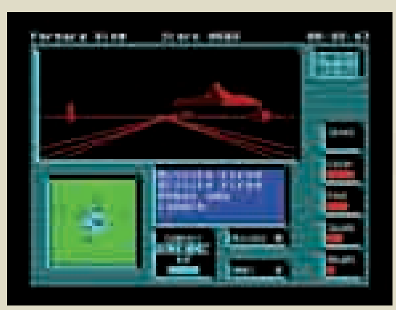
» *Zombi* (Amstrad): Those Frenchies know how to knock out some cracking CPC titles don't they?



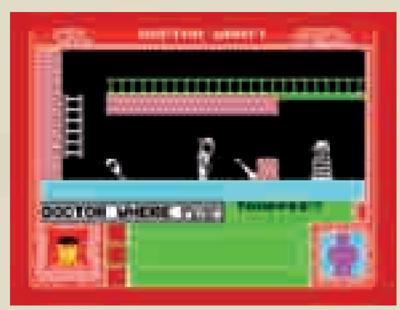
» *Bobby Bearing* (Amstrad): Find your ball-bearing brothers in this first ever "Curvispace 3D" game from The Edge.



» *Trailblazer* (Amstrad): Combining a football with a road in space – what could be more obvious? A fiendishly-fast game though…



» *Academy* (Spectrum): The sequel to Pete Cooke's *Tau Ceti*, was also well received.



» C&VG were more than happy with the adventures of *Doctor What* and awarded it with a C&VG Hit.



ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBOURS

RRRRRT FRRRRKN RRRRCKS!



- **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- **DEVELOPER:** LUCASARTS
- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **GENRE:** ZOMBIE-'EM-UP
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SNES
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5

HISTORY



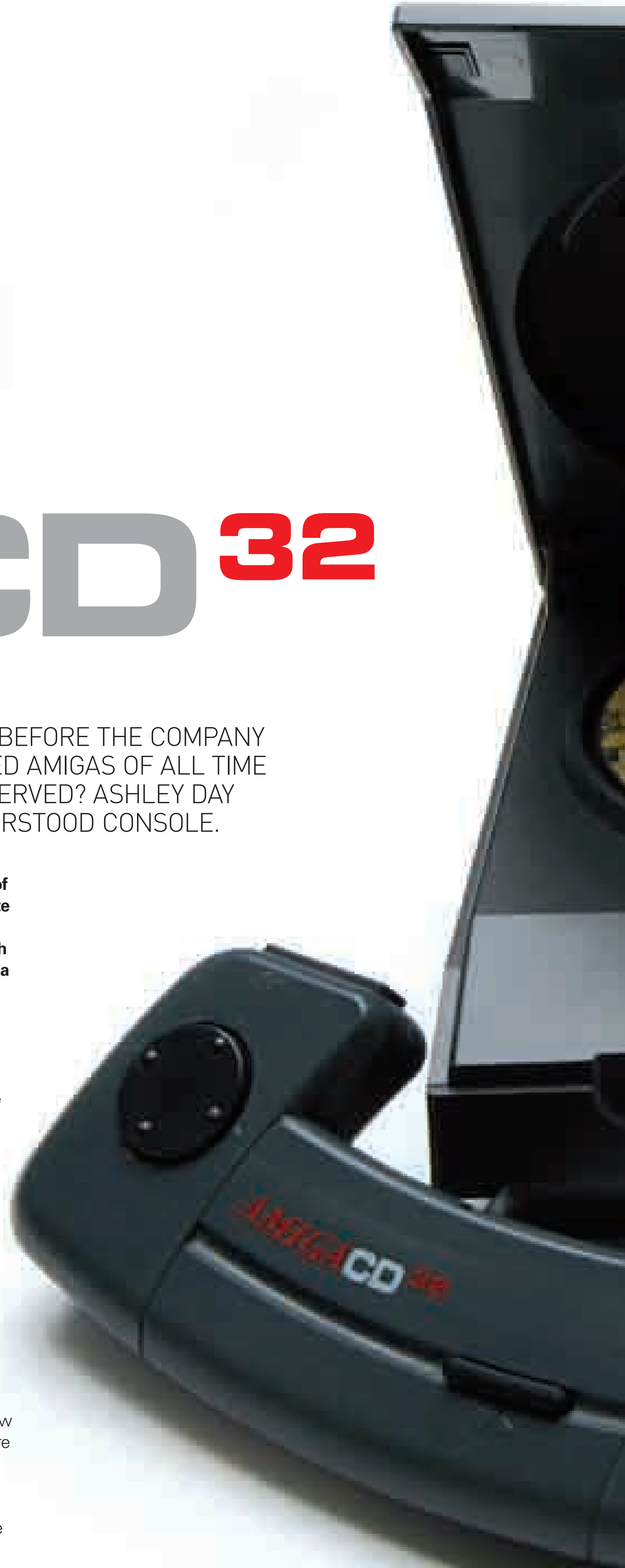
Zombies – much like ninjas, pirates, and robots – are a staple of the videogame world. Everyone loves a good zombie, and everyone loves a good zombie love-in. Look at the best games of all time; a great many of them feature zombies. *Resident Evil*, *House Of The Dead* and *FIFA*; all of these feature hideous, mindlessly shuffling zombies, and all sold well. Even Digitiser on Channel 4 Teletext featured a foul-mouthed mascot called Zombie Dave – he used to swear the most unprintable of profanities using zombie-speak, and the corporate bosses never found out. As we've no doubt proven, the undead are awesome, are capable of swearing in public with undue attention, and never need to be concerned about petty things like sun-block.

It's natural to assume then that you need to only add zombies to make a great game. While this formula might not always work, it certainly didn't harm Lucasarts' *Zombies Ate My Neighbours* game. The game actually contains a lot more than just zombies, and is a surreal pastiche of every single horror film you've ever seen (which is a lie, but it sure did sound exciting, didn't it readers?).

It has an air almost of *Gauntlet* (but you also rescue people), with an incredible sense of flamboyant fun and over-the-top silliness. This was at a time when Lucasarts had a greater sense of creativity and didn't simply relegate itself to churning out half-baked *Star Wars* nonsense. Like I said to George Lucas the other day, with the voice of a used car salesman – "Georgey, buddy, baby, enough with the *Stars Wars* shtick already! Diversify, get back to your creative roots and make games wid a little pizzazz!" But he only accused me of having "changed, man", threw a lemonade bottle past my head and started to weep silently into his big bushy beard. *Zombies Ate My Neighbours* is an absolutely brilliant game, from when Lucasarts actually cared and it has without doubt, one of the best endings in gaming history, ever. EVER!







AMIGA CD32

IT WAS COMMODORE'S FINAL HARDWARE DESIGN BEFORE THE COMPANY WENT BELLY UP AND IS ONE OF THE MOST DERIDED AMIGAS OF ALL TIME BUT IS THE CD32'S TERRIBLE REPUTATION SO DESERVED? ASHLEY DAY ARGUES THE CASE FOR HISTORY'S MOST MISUNDERSTOOD CONSOLE.

Although it launched in 1993, the story of the Amiga CD32 really begins in the late Eighties. Commodore dominated the home computer hardware market, with both the Commodore 64 and the Amiga 500, but were well aware that it had only cornered one half of the industry. Its computers were primarily business machines, albeit with massive gaming potential, with high prices that only the wealthiest families could afford. Consequently console manufacturers had taken the opposite approach by pricing hardware as low as possible and making profit on the games themselves. The space beneath the family TV set was increasingly taken up by a dedicated games console and Commodore knew that it had to come up with something similar in order to compete. Furthermore, the respective storage mediums of cassette tape and floppy disk did nothing to facilitate profit for Commodore themselves; the standard storage devices were easy to come by, so Commodore could not enforce licensing fees and, worse still, piracy of such software was incredibly easy, even for the home user.

Two attempts to break into the console market soon followed, with the Amiga CDTV, an Amiga 500 powered set top box, and the cartridge-based Commodore 64GS, but neither had the desired impact. The C64GS quickly died out due to its underpowered hardware and lack of games, whilst the CDTV passed by unnoticed thanks to its £699 price tag and the fact that nobody really knew how to best make use of the fledgling CD-ROM format. Still, Commodore soldiered on with the console idea, eventually settling on the CD32, a piece of hardware that, at the very least, had the potential to get Commodore into that coveted spot underneath the TV once again. Having learnt from its past mistakes with the CDTV and C64GS, the CD32 got a number of things right straight away. The chipset inside the box was based on the Amiga 1200, which had been released

Backwards Compatible?
Oh yes. The beauty of the Amiga hardware under the hood of the CD32 meant that it was compatible with all previous Amiga software. Okay, there weren't many previous Amiga games on compact disc except, of course, for the CDTV, which the CD32 was 100 per cent compatible with. Although Commodore's previous CD-based console had played host to mostly dull edutainment titles, there were a couple of games worth holding on to. Old Amiga favourites *Sim City* and *Lemmings* were available and worked perfectly on a CD32 with an Amiga mouse. The best CDTV game, however, was *The Case Of The Cautious Condor*, a little-known adventure game, in which the player had 30 minutes to solve a murder by exploring a hand-drawn comic book world and eavesdropping on characters' CD audio conversations. For anyone with a CD-based Amiga, this unique adventure comes highly recommended.



HAVING LEARNT FROM ITS PAST MISTAKES WITH THE CDTV AND C64GS, THE CD32 GOT A NUMBER OF THINGS RIGHT STRAIGHT AWAY



Year released: 1993

Original price: £250

Buy it now for: £25+

Associated magazines:
Amiga Power, Amiga Format, CU Amiga, CD32 Gamer, Amiga CD32 Magazine

Why the CD32 was great… Almost all of the Amiga's best games were available on the CD32, but without the hassle of disk-swapping, compatibility issues or decade-old joysticks. The CD32 was the Xbox of its day, bringing all the era's best computer games to your TV without all the nonsense that computer owners had to put up with. Better still, many of the games were significantly better than the original Amiga versions. It may have been the black sheep of the Amiga family but it was a sheep worth having. Erm…

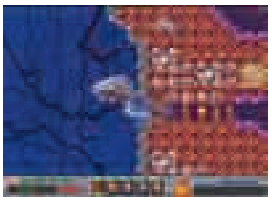
AMIGA CD32



» Chris Evans and Commodore UK's David Pleasance at the CD32 launch event.



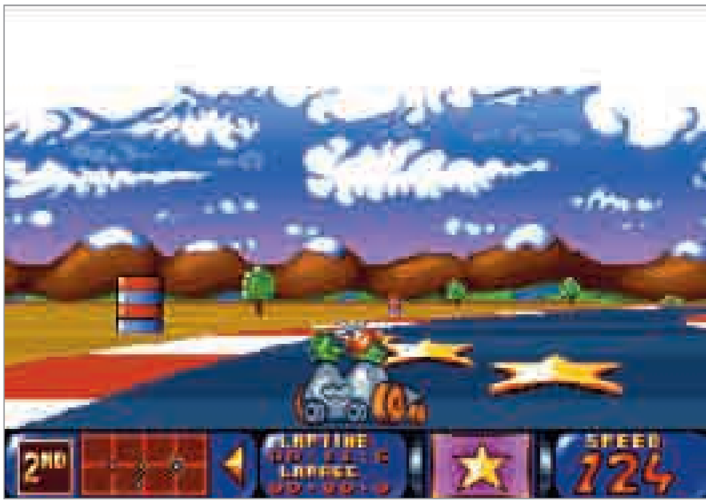
» *Diggers* was an original but uninspiring launch title.



» *Extractors* was a sequel to *Diggers* that was never released. The full game can be found on the 'net though.



» A bold American ad for the CD32. Too little, too late.



» The graphically impressive *Bump 'N' Burn* made good use of CD32's Akiko chip.

in the previous year, meaning that software would look bang up to date, while the machine itself also benefited from improved aesthetics. Jettisoning the confusing "set top box" look of the CDTV, Commodore designed the CD32 to look a lot more like a traditional games console so that consumers knew that the machine was a pure gaming device before they'd switched it on. Close comparison, in fact, reveals several visual similarities to Sega's Mega Drive – almost certainly a deliberate move to proudly show off the fact that the CD32 had twice as many "bits" as Sega's hardware. The console look was topped off with a custom control pad, made specifically for the CD32. In retrospect, the controller is one of the worst ever designed as its D-pad was easily broken after extended play; however, at the time, good controllers were judged by how many buttons they had and with six action buttons to its name, the CD32 pad did not disappoint. Finally, the CD-ROM medium had now been around for a few more years, giving consumers, developers and publishers the opportunity to get to grips with the format's strengths and weaknesses whilst, fortunately for Commodore, the technology had not reached the point where software could easily be pirated.



As for the internal architecture itself, the CD32 was almost exactly the same as an Amiga 1200 except with the keyboard removed and the floppy drive replaced with a CD-ROM drive. A less obvious addition, however, was the addition of the Akiko chip to the 1200's custom chipset. To this day, the full capabilities of Akiko remain a mystery to all but the most tech-savvy, but we do know that its main purpose was to perform "Chunky to Planar" conversions on the hardware rather than waste valuable processor time. In plain English this means that 3D games would run much quicker on the CD32 than they would on an unexpanded A1200 and with several *Doom* clones just around the corner this would prove to be a usefully pre-emptive addition.

The CD-ROM drive itself, was designed to transfer data from disc at 300k per second, an abysmally slow speed by today's standards, but twice as fast as earlier CD-based hardware like the Fujitsu FM Towns and Commodore's own CDTV. More importantly, of course, the medium was much faster than floppy disks and would eliminate the pesky problem of disk-swapping that plagued fans of adventure games, which often took up more than ten floppies. The loss of a writeable format was countered with the inclusion of internal flash memory, which could be used to save game data, much as Sega's Saturn would the following year.

Externally the CD32 seemed like any other simple games console, but there were hidden depths. As well as the usual ports and sockets associated with such hardware, the CD32 featured an S-Video socket for improved picture quality that far exceeded the standard RF output of both the SNES and Mega Drive, whilst the two nine-pin joypad ports allowed any Amiga compatible controller to be plugged into the machine, meaning that mouse-driven games like *Cannon Fodder* and *Sim City* could be played just as they were meant to. Best of all, however, the back of the console featured a full expansion bay, which allowed for the attachment of an FMV module to play Video CDs (and even some of the Phillips CDi's videos) and, much more excitingly, the bay could be used in conjunction with a planned expansion card that would turn the CD32 into a fully functioning A1200, complete with disk drive ports, printer ports, extra RAM, faster processors and even a hard drive. An auxiliary port, on the left of the machine, allowed for an Amiga 4000 keyboard to be



» Special issues of CD32 Gamer came with an entire free game.



» An early CD32 ad, designed to attract potential Mega Drive buyers.



» The most successful CD32 magazine lasted 21 issues, each of which came with a disc of demos and shareware.



» *Simon The Sorcerer*: one of the best reasons to buy a CD32.



» The first CD32 bundle came with the lacklustre *Microcosm*, among others.



» Another CD32 bundle that failed to pack in any killer apps.



» With games like *Cannon Fodder* and *Chaos Engine* this bundle was great but came a little too late to help.

plugged in, thus completing the CD32's potential to function as an Amiga computer.

In September 1993, the CD32 launched. As had become tradition with Amiga hardware, the console had limited appeal in its home country of America, but received a much warmer reception in Europe, most notably in Germany and the UK, where Commodore UK supported the console with a fierce marketing campaign. In the time-honoured Commodore tradition, a celebrity was roped in to endorse the console with "popular" TV presenter Chris Evans lending his visage to CD32 promos, just as William Shatner had endorsed the Vic 20 over a decade earlier. More aggressively, however, Commodore UK went straight for the throat of the Japanese console giants. A huge billboard advertisement was erected just outside Sega's UK headquarters and read "To be this good would take Sega ages", whilst Commodore UK's boss, David Pleasance, took every opportunity to remind consumers that to buy into the CD32's nearest rival, the Mega CD, required them to buy a Mega Drive for it to work and would therefore cost far in excess of the CD32's price tag.

Somehow, Commodore UK's brutal tactics worked… to a degree. Though the CD32 did little to dent the armour of the SNES and Mega Drive, it was a relative success in the booming CD arena. Conventional wisdom dictates that the CD32 was a complete failure, but the truth is that in 1993, sales of CD32 software far exceeded those of any other CD-ROM medium, including the Mega CD and even PC-CD. Why? Well, price was an important factor. Mega CD games cost between £40 and £50 each, whilst PC-CD ROM games were much more expensive, reaching as high as £70 in the case of Virgin's *The 7th Guest*. CD32 titles on the other hand compared favourably with their floppy counterparts. The most expensive games were released at only £29.99 while some came in much lower or added value by compiling more than one game onto a disc and even adding playable demos, as was the case with Team 17's hugely popular double packs.

But what of the games? Sadly the CD32 was initially bombarded with ports of regular Amiga games, which was undoubtedly bad news for existing Amiga owners – but for the thousands of people whose only Amiga was a CD32, it wasn't all bad. Sure, many of the games that were ported directly from the A500 failed to take advantage of the new hardware, but then with games as good as *Speedball 2* and *Superfrog*, there was little reason to complain.

THE CD32 WAS BOMBARDED WITH PORTS OF REGULAR AMIGA GAMES, WHICH WAS BAD NEWS FOR EXISTING AMIGA OWNERS BUT FOR THE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHOSE ONLY AMIGA WAS A CD32, IT WASN'T ALL BAD

There were plenty of games that did take advantage of the CD32 though. Unfortunately, some were merely misdirected attempts to exploit the CD medium but, equally, there were original games that made the CD32 worth owning and even ports of existing Amiga games that used the new hardware to improve on the original.

Of those ports, nearly every game featured a CD-Audio soundtrack or animated intro, whilst a few others were boosted with extra levels, characters or something even better. Sadly, the launch software couldn't be counted amongst those that added anything new. The laughably poor *Oscar* was a terrible platform game, directly ported from the A1200, while the far more interesting *Diggers* was a good *Lemmings*-style puzzle game that, though very playable, hardly wowed prospective buyers. Aside from both games cohabiting the same CD, neither took advantage of the CD32's true potential. The first game to really do that came from Team 17 in the shape of *Ultimate Body Blows*. By combining characters from the original *Body*

Shareware Showdown

With the Amiga's massive shareware scene and the rise of Aminet, an Internet archive of free Amiga software, the CD32 was missing out on a wealth of brilliant games coded by enthusiastic Amiga hobbyists. It didn't take long for a few enterprising shareware distributors to begin producing CD32-compatible compilations, however. Early compilations like *Now That's What I Call Games* soon became available, whilst most Amiga magazines started to covermount CDs of the latest Public Domain games that would autorun on a CD32. Best of all the shareware compilations however, were undoubtedly *The Assassins* CDs: four compact discs jam-packed with many of the Amiga's best free games, presented through an expertly put together menu and at a reasonable price. Oddly enough, the four *Assassins* CDs are still available to buy, brand new, from their original manufacturer, who still operates through eBay. Track them down before it's too late.

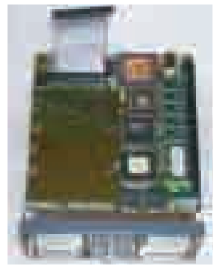
AMIGA CD[32]





» **Above:** The FMV Module allowed Video CDs to be played, but was overpriced at £199. **Right:** Commodore's proposed CD1200 would have allowed the Amiga 1200 to play CD32 games, but was never released.





» **Above left:** These boards allowed developers to program games directly to the CD32 like a real Amiga. **Right:** The SX32 was one of a handful of devices to turn the CD32 into a full Amiga.

Blows and *Body Blows Galactic*, an epic roster of fighters was created that just would not have been possible on floppy disk. Several more expanded Amiga games soon followed: Team 17 struck again by releasing a double pack of *Alien Breed II* and *Alien Breed Tower Assault*, which was most notable for the specially filmed FMV intro that featured Team 17 staff spreading their Yorkshire accents deep into the far reaches of outer-space.

Codemasters took the easy route by using the massive storage space of the CD to bundle six *Dizzy* adventures together on a disk. Titled *The Big 6*, it was a cheap way of getting a title out, but the excellence of the *Dizzy* games made it an essential release. The CD32 version of *Worms* made more interesting use of the format: it allowed you to flip up the lid and pop in your own audio CDs, thereby allowing custom soundtracks eight years before the Xbox did.

Sound was, in fact, the one aspect of the CD medium that CD32 developers most made full use of; while most just included a musical score, some were daring enough to attempt CD speech. *Liberation* was one of the first; the voice acting wasn't great, but is fondly remembered for such classic (read: hideously embarrassing) lines as "Hey you, you wanna buy an animal? A real stuffed animal?". The aim was to create an immersive and realistic world, but was undone by the cheesy lines and soon became a parody of itself.

Adventure designers fared much better and, as history has proven, found that CD-speech and graphic adventures fitted together perfectly. Both arriving in 1994, *Beneath A Steel Sky* and *Simon The Sorcerer* broke new ground and shaped the way all adventure games are created today. Instead of having to read a line of dialogue that floated above the character's head, the speech would jump out of the TV set and into the gamer's world. When done well it brought added characterisation to everyone you met and allowed the listener to understand situations in a clearer way than was possible with text. Speech allowed characters to sound like they might be lying



» This CD32 magazine lasted only two issues.



» *Beneath A Steel Sky* reached new heights on CD32.

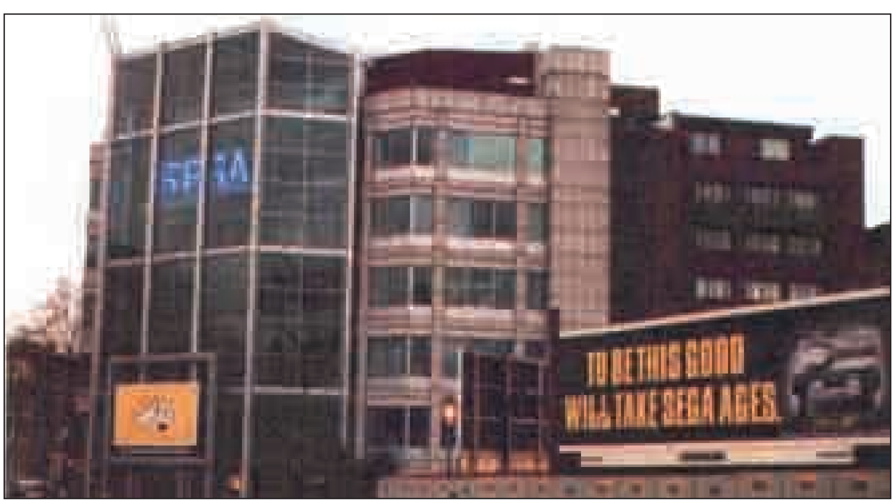


» *Flink* was a great CD32 platformer that also made it to the Mega CD.

or to show if they sympathised with the main protagonist or even if they were a possible danger. *Beneath A Steel Sky* far outstripped its floppy counterpart with a full-speech track voiced by members of the Royal Shakespeare Company, whilst the opening sequence featured a hand-drawn comic-style intro, exclusive to the CD. *Simon The Sorcerer*'s production quality was similarly high: comedian Chris Barrie voiced Simon to an excellent standard, dropping his trademark wit and cynicism into every remark. The supporting cast did their best to match Barrie's excellent performance and ensured that the end product stood the test of time. *Simon The Sorcerer* stands out to this very day for its voice acting as well as its devilish puzzles, humorous plot and outstanding hand-drawn backgrounds.

Another voice-fuelled adventure game did appear on the CD32 but was, disappointingly, only available in Germany. *Inherit The Earth* introduced the player to a future Earth where humans had become extinct, and animals roamed the land on two feet and worshipped the long-dead humans as gods. As you may have already guessed, the voice acting was all in German so it is difficult to tell if it was any good. A text-only, English version did appear on the Amiga and PC though and is well worth checking out.

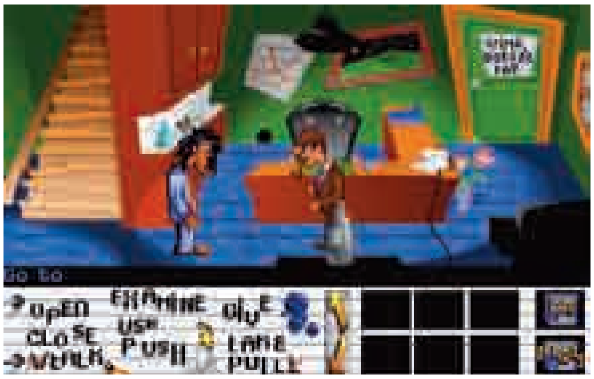
As well as the aforementioned conversions there were some CD32 exclusives. First up was *Bump 'N' Burn*, a cutesy cartoon racer by Grandslam. Though it failed to better *Mario Kart*'s gameplay it did have a few graphical tricks up its sleeve that showed how the CD32 could have competed with the other consoles if it had been pushed properly. For a start the game ran in full-screen rather than the split-screen that *MK* players were used to. Secondly, it made great use of the Akiko chip to generate a track that climbed uphill, rolled down and banked at the corners. Finally, each race was preceded by a *Wacky Races* style introduction commentary in full CD audio.



» Commodore's cheeky CD32 ads went straight for Sega's throat.



» A shot from *Microcosm*'s expensive FMV intro.



» *Sixth Sense Investigations* was the last known CD32 game to be released in 1998.





» **Left:** A CD32 advert from one of Commodore's biggest markets. **Above:** The extra disc space allowed for an unprecendented number of characters in *Ultimate Body Blows*.

Another CD-exclusive title that wowed Amiga owners was Psygnosis' *Misadventures Of Flink*. Most Amiga platform games paled in comparison to those on the SNES and Mega Drive, but *Flink* was refreshingly different. Graphically it soared well above the usual standard, with gorgeously colourful levels and screen-filling monsters; it used Akiko to generate sprite scaling and rotation effects and even had an unprecedented 60Hz mode!

There were certainly a few games that showed off the potential of commodore's latest machine, but there were still signs that some developers didn't yet understand where the true capabilities of the medium lied. Despite creating magic with *Flink*, Psygnosis was one such developer to misjudge the CD format so dramatically. With its first CD32 game, *Microcosm*, the developer created a 3D shooter that used 34% of the CD for music and 62% for pre-rendered graphics, leaving only 4% for the actual game, which some might say they forgot to add at all. Still, *Microcosm* was something of an oddity on the CD32, which had far fewer FMV-driven games than on other formats, like the Mega CD for example.



» *Liberation* was the sequel to *Captive* and a very good CD32 RPG.

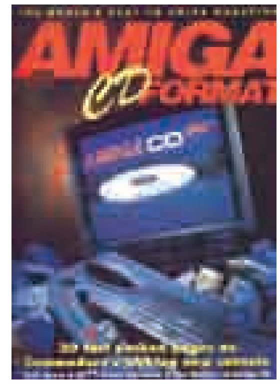
With its promising start, towards the end of 1993, it looked as if the CD32 might actually develop into Commodore's first decent console. After all, the ability to easily port Amiga software across meant that they had the support of the developers and the fair prices and general quality of the games meant that consumers favoured the console over its direct competitors; however, the CD32's future was already doomed. Commodore was falling apart at the seams, having milked profits dry and developed far too many hardware variations in a short space of time, and it was slowly becoming obvious to the public. Commodore Australia had already shut down, months earlier, and Commodore USA was next. Only seven months after the CD32's launch, Commodore's main office closed its doors for the last time. Commodore UK struggled on for a while, and even tried to buy the whole company at one point, but it was not to be. Commodore was dead and although the rights to both the Commodore name and the Amiga would be sold from company to company over the next three years, it became apparent that the brand would not return.

Developers continued to produce new CD32 games long after April 1994, however. No doubt encouraged by the Amiga's massive user base and the fact that third-party manufacturers had developed CD32 compatible CD-ROM drives for the A1200/A4000, the CD32 didn't truly find its best software until long after Commodore had perished. Great games like *Worms*, *Gloom* and *Alien Breed 3D* all made their CD32 debut in 1995 and beyond.

Even if Commodore hadn't passed on, however, it's doubtful that CD32 support would have lasted much longer than it did. By 1997, far superior consoles like the PlayStation and N64 were doing so much more than the CD32, essentially a product of the 2D era, could ever hope to achieve. There's no doubting that the console was a moderate success though and, had Commodore survived, it's possible that they would have built on that success to create the CD64 or CD128. Who knows where the Amiga CD might be today?

Yet, in many ways, the CD32 did live on. Amiga fans may have preferred the A1200 or A4000 back in '93, but with many having moved on to the PC (or Mac) since then, there's little room left on the desk for a second computer. It's the CD32, however, that retro Amiga lovers are increasingly turning to for their slice of Blitter-fuelled nostalgia. The compact design of the console and the speed and ease-of-use of the CD games make the CD32 the most convenient, hassle-free way to enjoy an old Amiga game. Sure, not all of the Amiga's games were ported across, but most of the best ones were and plenty were graced with enough significant improvements to make the console worthwhile. What's more, if you have an old Amiga game lying around, that wasn't available on CD, there are ways to get it to play (see boxout).

In short, the CD32 may not have been the best Amiga ever made, but it was certainly the most interesting and seemed to point the way for a possible bright future for the Amiga format before Commodore kicked the bucket and left us with what is essentially a more accessible Amiga 1200, with a couple of exclusive games, but one that's nowhere near as bad as some like to make out.



» A 6-page CD32 supplement given away free with Amiga Format in September 1993.

Unlocking the CD32's true potential

It is possible to add floppy disk drives, hard drives and a keyboard to the CD32 to turn the console into a fully-fledged Amiga computer. To do so requires an SX-1 or SX-32 expansion card, which are quite rare these days and very expensive. For those who want to play the floppy-based games, however, there is an easier way. For those who know exactly how, it is possible to copy the Amiga's floppy disks to a CD-ROM, add a CD32 boot-sequence and, just like that, the game will work on an unexpanded CD32. The more technically-minded are also able to store many floppy games on a single CD and load them from a menu. Please don't ask us how it's done though. Firstly, we don't know and secondly, it's a legally grey practice that, at the very least, requires you to own the original floppies.

Special thanks to www.amigahistory.co.uk for supplying all photographs.

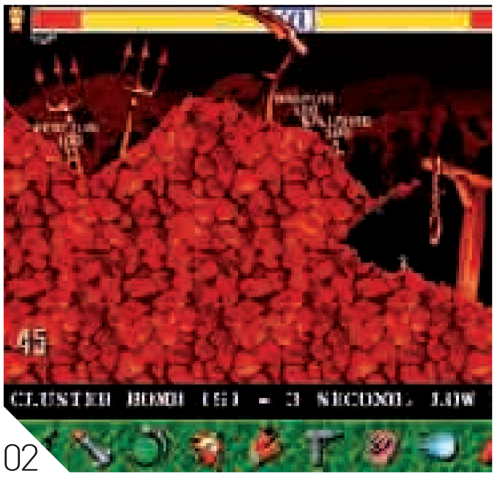


AMIGA CD32

PERFECT TEN GAMES

We'd love to say that the CD32 was home to plenty of exclusive titles and not just 500 ports, but we'd be lying. Still, here's a selection of titles that you really shouldn't be without.
Screenshots courtesy of www.lemonamiga.com


01


02


03


04

DIGGERS

» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **PUBLISHED BY:** COMMODORE
» **CREATED BY:** MILLENNIUM INTERACTIVE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** JAMES POND2: ROBOCOD, GLOBAL EFFECT, VITAL LIGHT

01 **One of the bundled launch titles for the star-crossed console, *Diggers* followed the antics of four mining concerns on the planet Zarg as they competed, with the help of the user, to rob the world of its resources.** *Diggers* hasn't aged well, as it clearly attempted to mimic the success other strategy/management games had seen on the Amiga. The joypad provided a frustrating interface experience, but fortunately Millenium had the foresight to allow mouse control. Clean, if uninspired, graphics and chirpy tunes made it an enjoyable title for the right gamer, but was probably a bad choice for a bundled game. It pissed on its accompanying launch title (*Oscar*) from a great height, mind you.

WORMS

» **RELEASED:** 1995
» **PUBLISHED BY:** OCEAN
» **CREATED BY:** TEAM 17
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ALIEN BREED

02 ***Worms* appears to have been released on practically every gaming platform known to man, so it should come as no surprise to learn that the CD32 received a version of its very own.** It should also come as no surprise to learn that, like many other CD32 titles that have been mentioned on these two pages, *Worms* was pretty much identical to the original Amiga 500 version. Again though, it's a wonderful little title and the ability of the CD32's mouse meant that those pesky little annelids were just as easy to control on Amiga's console as they were on its home computer. Interestingly, a legal download of the CD32 version of *Worms* appears on the Dream17 website, so check it out at www.dream17.co.uk/softography.php?id=27&s=downloads.

FLINK

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **PUBLISHED BY:** PSYGNOSIS
» **CREATED BY:** PSYGNOSIS
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BENEFACTOR, MICROCOSM, LEMMINGS

03 **One of the few dedicated CD32 games, from 16-bit legend Psygnosis.** Also known as *The Misadventures Of Flink*, this game made full, unabashed use of the monumental storage space available on these new-fangled CD ROMs and greatly beneffited from it. The back story is pretty standard stuff (a wizard's apprentice putting paid to some evil dude's nefarious antics), but what's fascinating is the impressive number of cross-genre elements seamlessly blended into the gameplay. RPG, beat-'em-up, shmup, puzzle and adventure all intertwine in this impressive demonstration of what the CD32 was really capable of. The whole thing gets kicked in the nads by a crippling lack of a save option, however. Damn shame about that. Yes sir.

BANSHEE

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **PUBLISHED BY:** CORE DESIGN
» **CREATED BY:** CORE DESIGN
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** TOMB RAIDER

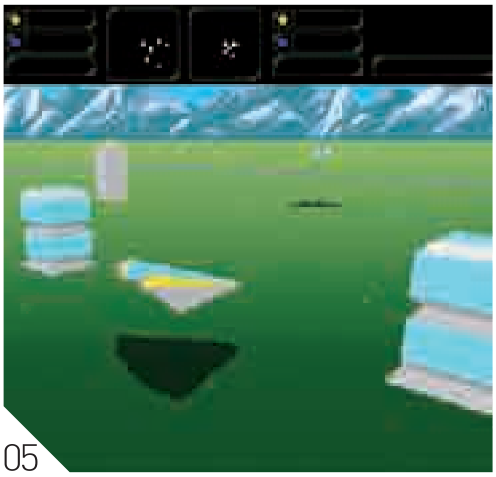
04 **It's rare to find a decent shmup on the Amiga and even rarer to discover one on the CD32, so when you discover one as good as *Banshee* you're not going to let it out of your sight.** Obviously based on Capcom's *1942* series, *Banshee* is a tough as nails shooter that will have you gnashing your teeth in frustration as you gaze dumbstruck at its stunningly crisp visuals and hectic onscreen action. It may not be the most original of concepts but it has been put together with such flair and obvious skill that it really doesn't matter in the slightest. Fortunately for CD32 owners, Banshee plays perfectly fine with the machine's joypad and Core Design even saw fit to include an extra two levels to fight through. Those with a fetish for tough blasters would do well to track this down straight away.

GUARDIAN

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **PUBLISHED BY:** ACID SOFTWARE
» **CREATED BY:** ACID SOFTWARE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SUPER SKIDMARKS, ROADKILL

05 **It wouldn't be at all unreasonable to classify this unimaginatively titled game as '*Starfox* for the Amiga generation'.** A dynamic, playable and brightly coloured 3-D shmup that, for once, was actually better when using the CD32's nasty joypad thing. Many early 3-D fly-'em-ups descended into tedious simulations, rather than the zoom-around-blowing-stuff-up type games we really wanted, but *Guardian* shrewdly kept itself well within the "hit 'em hard, hit 'em fast" parameters. By keeping up the game speed and making the ship as controllable as possible, it elegantly camouflaged the somewhat limited gameplay and ticks all the right boxes for a proper console game, which, in retrospect, was exactly what the CD32 lacked and so desperately needed.





05



06



07



08



09



10

BENEATH A STEEL SKY

» **RELEASED:** 1994

» **PUBLISHED BY:** VIRGIN INTERACTIVE

» **CREATED BY:** REVOLUTION SOFTWARE

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BROKEN SWORD

06 Along with *The Secret of Monkey Island* and *Indiana Jones & The Fate Of Atlantis*, Revolution's *Beneath A Steel Sky* is quite possibly one of the greatest Amiga point-and-click adventures ever made. Like many CD32 ports, *BASS* didn't push the console in any way other than offering superior music and greatly reduced loading times, but in a way this didn't matter. It certainly took a while to get used to the CD32's rather clunky pad, but play this with a mouse and everything became much more enjoyable. *Beneath A Steel Sky* may be little more than a basic port, but it's a basic port of one of the Amiga's greatest adventures, and owners of the machine rightly lapped it up.

ALIEN BREED: TOWER ASSAULT

» **RELEASED:** 1994

» **PUBLISHED BY:** TEAM 17

» **CREATED BY:** TEAM 17

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** PROJECT X

07 Team 17 was well known for going above and beyond the call of duty when it came to porting games across to the CD32, and the superb *Tower Assault* was no exception. Featuring an extremely lengthy intro, beautifully drawn sprites, a new retreat move that enabled you to walk backwards while firing, and plenty of over-the-top blasting action, *Tower Assault* was yet another excellent blaster from Team 17 and was perfectly suited to the CD32. Vastly superior to the PC version that appeared at the same time, *Tower Assault* was a stunning shooter that deserves to be in every CD32 owner's collection. If that wasn't enough, it also came with an AGA enhanced version of *Alien Breed II: The Horror Continues.*

D/GENERATION

» **RELEASED:** 1993

» **PUBLISHED BY:** MINDSCAPE

» **CREATED BY:** ROBERT COOK

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** FURY OF THE FURRIES, THEME PARK, SYNDICATE

08 A prime example of why the CD32 ultimately failed to grab the attention of seasoned gamers. *D/Generation* was already a fairly well respected game, so using it to acclimatise Amiga-philes to the new machine wasn't a bad idea. In principle. The decent isometric run-and-gun gameplay – interspersed with puzzler elements as the player infiltrates a building infested with out-of-control bio weapons – made zero use of the console's capabilities. The massive storage space of the CD was totally ignored, the joypad control was as effective as a one-legged man in an arse-kicking contest and the sparse graphics left players wondering why they didn't just stick with their Amiga 500. It's still a damn good game though…

SIMON THE SORCERER

» **RELEASED:** 1994

» **PUBLISHED BY:** BLITTERSOFT

» **CREATED BY:** ADVENTURE SOFT

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** WAXWORKS

09 Like *Beneath A Steel Sky*, *Simon The Sorcerer* was another classic 500 title that greatly benefited from the CD32's storage capacity. While there were no improvements in Simon's visuals, the new soundtrack and superb voice recordings greatly enhanced *Simon The Sorcerer*'s atmosphere. Indeed, Chris Barrie's voiceover for Simon was a revelation and set high standards for other companies to follow. Sure, he had the deepest 12-year-old voice that you'd ever heard, but there was no denying that his acidic tongue perfectly suited Simon's many sarky one-liners. It may be little more than a port, but, with the greatly reduced loading times and superb voice acting, fans should snap it up straight away.

ZOOL

» **RELEASED:** 1993

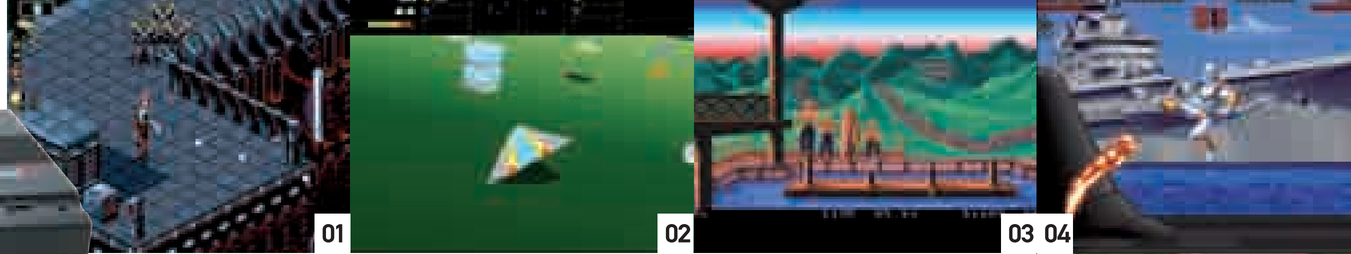
» **PUBLISHED BY:** GREMLIN

» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ACTUA SOCCER

10 *Zool*, is generally considered as one of the greatest Amiga platformers ever made – hardly surprising when it has no *Mario* or *Sonic* games – so it should come as no surprise to learn that the CD32 version was obviously the best incarnation of the bunch. Whilst a little too garish at times, *Zool*'s cinematic opening, frenetic soundtrack and console styled nature means it's perfectly suited to the CD32, and best of all there's a brand new massive world to explore. Whilst *Zool* was never in the same league as the aforementioned platforming superstars (you can kid yourself otherwise but you know it's not true), it had no equal on the Amiga, so why not treat yourself to the definitive version of the game? Go on. You know it makes perfect sense.







AMIGA CD32 and the rest...

Looking over the following two pages you're probably thinking that the CD32 was home to Amiga 500 and 1200 ports and very little else, and to be honest you'd mainly be right. That's not to say they weren't good games though.

01 SKELETON KREW
02 GUARDIAN
03 CHAMBERS OF SHAOLIN
04 ULTIMATE BODY BLOWS
05 MORPH
06 FLINK
07 PREMIERE
08 FRONTIER: ELITE II
09 BRUTAL: PAWS OF FURY
10 POWER DRIVE
11 TROLLS
12 JAMES POND II: ROBOCOD
13 CANNON FODDER
14 THE LOST VIKINGS
15 SEEK & DESTROY
16 PIRATES! GOLD
17 FIELDS OF GLORY
18 THE CHAOS ENGINE
19 MEAN ARENAS
20 RISE OF THE ROBOTS
21 FURY OF THE FURRIES
22 CHUCK ROCK
23 SHADOW FIGHTER
24 UNIVERSE
25 BATTLE CHESS
26 FIRE & ICE
27 LIBERATION
28 ALFRED CHICKEN
29 THE LABYRINTH OF TIME
30 SOCCER KID
31 JUNGLE STRIKE
32 D-GENERATION
33 BEAVERS
34 PINBALL FANTASIES
35 STAR CRUSADER
36 NAUGHTY ONES
37 DIGGERS
38 BRUTAL SPORTS SERIES FOOTBALL
39 MARVIN'S MARVELLOUS ADVENTURE
40 GLOOM
41 VITAL LIGHT
42 EXILE
43 GUNSHIP 2000
44 RYDER CUP: JOHNNIE WALKER
45 BENEATH A STEEL SKY
46 LEGENDS
47 AKIRA
48 DEEP CORE
49 PINBALL ILLUSIONS
50 ARABIAN NIGHTS
51 LAMBORGHINI AMERICAN CHALLENGE
52 MICROCOSM
53 ROADKILL
54 LITIL DIVIL
55 AMIGA CD FOOTBALL
56 SLEEPWALKER
57 WEMBLEY INTERNATIONAL SOCCER
58 DARKSEED
59 ARCADE POOL
60 SIMON THE SORCERER
61 GLOBAL EFFECT
62 ATR: ALL TERRAIN RACING
63 IK+
64 UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN
65 ALIEN BREED 3D
66 THE SEVEN GATES OF JAMBALA
67 QUIK THE THUNDER RABBIT
68 SENSIBLE SOCCER V1.1
69 WHALES VOYAGE
70 CASTLES II: SIEGE & CONQUEST
71 ZOOL 2
72 MYTH: HISTORY IN THE MAKING
73 FEARS
74 TOP GEAR 2
75 DANGEROUS STREETS
76 SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
77 WILD CUP SOCCER
78 BANSHEE

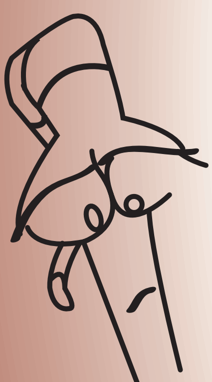



05
06
07
08 09
11
12
13
14 15
20
21
22
SELECT
23 24
29
30
31
32 33
38
39
40
41 42
47
48
49
50 51
56
57
58
Mortyn Brown
59 60
65
66
67
68 69
74
75
76
77 78

THE MAKING OF...

EARTHWORM JIM

Like a candied apple of ecstasy dangling over a pit of rabid lawyers, Shiny Entertainment released its smash debut in 1994 featuring nothing more than a dirt-eating, chewy length of worm flesh. But it took men of far-reaching vision – with the cunning of a dozen well-organised hamsters – to make it happen. Dave Perry explained the depths of human endurance his team suffered to bring us Earthworm Jim: "Doug would force us to all listen to Johnny Cash." Who said there are no more heroes?















It was a tenuous time for videogames. Their popularity had reached a peak not seen since the mid-Seventies, but the looming storm cloud of 3-dimensional change was... looming, like... a big, dark, polygonal cloud.

Dave Perry found himself staring into the industry's abyss, wondering whether to jump, climb down, or be pushed: "I had an offer to head up the game development for a new game publisher called Playmates Interactive Entertainment." he begins. "I decided not to take the job and instead signed a contract to borrow a few million dollars from them to fund Shiny. Thank God I managed to pay them back!"

NOT NOW, PETER. I'M LAUGHING AT FATE!

But God had nothing to do with it. Unless you subscribe to the theory that God created worms. If that's the case, then Dave is right to thank Him and his legions of wriggly right-doers, for they provided the inspiration around which Shiny's establishing title was built. Otherwise, he'd do well to thank another creature (who may or may not have been created by God (who may or may not exist*)): Doug TenNapel.

"In those days, we always had lots of ideas, and licences too, so we had many choices of direction. The team mentioned a guy called Doug TenNapel for the animator's position, and I said he couldn't join the team unless he did a demo to show his talent." explains the 6' 8" code commander.

TenNapel had freelanced on early Nintendo games, and had been employed as lead animator on Bluesky Software's Mega Drive adaptation of *Jurassic Park*, when he was introduced to Perry. As Doug himself admits, his strength was not in animation, but in character design.

Dave told us about his first impressions of the renowned artist: "Doug is very tall. Like me." But Dave's opinions go beyond the pencil jockey's physical stature, however impressive and similar to his own it might be.

> "I HATED THE STUFF THAT INTERPLAY, VIS AND CRAVE DID. I ASKED THEM TO STOP, BUT INTERPLAY REFUSED" DAVE PERRY

"He's a super creative guy, is easy to like and he's even good at basketball. Doug just oozes new characters. If you had lunch with him, his napkin would have five new characters doodled on it by the time you left the restaurant. I can't imagine how many he has now in his sketch books." Our guess would be 84, but it's one in particular that has our immediate interest: an eccentric hybrid of sci-fi technology, a cylindrical invertebrate and an overfull wheelie-bin of surrealist humour.

"Doug drew Earthworm Jim as his demo for Shiny, and got the job! I liked it so much it became our chosen direction and we turned down everything else to make it happen," recalls Perry. TenNapel had been desperate to leave his current employ and get in on the ground level with a truly inspired game design, so had gone overboard preparing for his Shiny interview.

Although it wasn't his intention at the time, all the characters he'd squeezed from his pencil in preparation for the showdown with Perry were incorporated into this new project – each more surreal than the last. But in order for Shiny's debut title to really grab gamers by the eyeballs and twist their nipples into submission if they tried to put the controller down, Dave Perry insisted every team member take an active role in the game's early development.



» Whether it's real life or a videogame, seeing someone getting bit on the arse is always funny.



» Jim wonders if anyone knows that he's stuck to his gun…

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** SHINY ENTERTAINMENT
» **DEVELOPED BY:** DAVE PERRY, DOUG TENNAPEL
» **YEAR RELEASED:** 1994
» **GENRE:** PLATFORM
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ENTER THE MATRIX
SYSTEMS: GAMECUBE, PLAYSTATION 2, PC, XBOX
YEAR: 2003

MDK
SYSTEMS: MAC, PC, PLAYSTATION, DREAMCAST
YEAR: 1997

MESSIAH
SYSTEMS: PC
YEAR: 2000

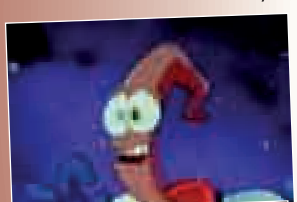


THE MAKING OF...

EARTHWORM JIM

ANIMATED ANNELIDS

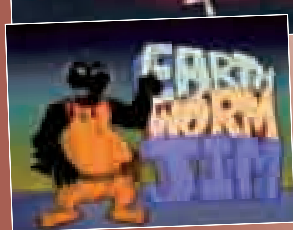
Jim's transformation to the small screen, though fairly short lived, saw almost as much cult success as the game. While Doug TenNapel had provided the voice of Jim in the original videogame, his cartoon counterpart was eloquently articulated by Homer Simpson himself, Dan Castellaneta (after previously voicing Jim's appearances in *Clayfighter 63⅓* and *Earthworm Jim 3-D*). Perry explained his part in the expansion of Jim's universe: "It was written by Doug Langdale and Doug TenNapel worked closely with him. I think they still work together today! So they made good partners. "While we were making *EWJ* we had laserdiscs of Tex Avery cartoons playing 24/7, so the animators were always inspired. I was more on the business side of all these deals so I didn't get involved in the details of the toy design or cartoon story. "I did work hard on getting a movie deal and actually got there, only to be stopped by Universal. But that's another story!"

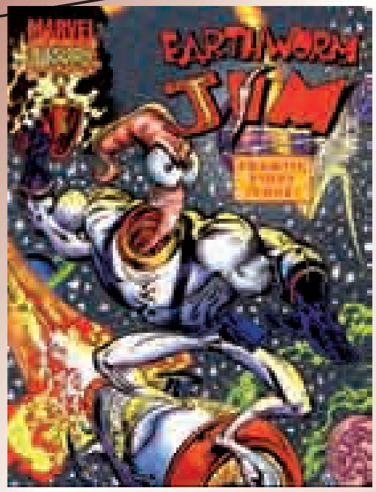






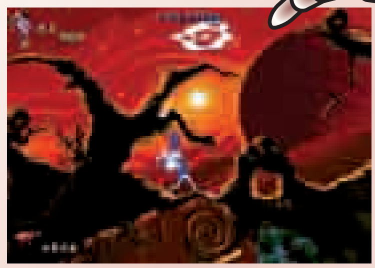






» Marvel published a three issue Jim comic, although a second comic was released only in Britain, based on the animated series rather than the game.

"DOUG IS VERY TALL, LIKE ME"
DAVE PERRY



» Go to heck! Jim returns to Evil the Cat's lair in the sequel.



» Jim was bungee jumping long before it was popular.

"Doug had created another character in the past called Evil the Cat, so I wanted him to include that character in the game, and we came up with a rule that everyone had to help with designs. So, everyone would draw sketches of ideas and we would make a giant pile of them. Everyone would laugh at the programmer's artwork, as it sucked, but it would always get conversation going. Sometimes people would believe in something strongly, so they'd pull together a demo to show what they meant. If it was possible, it went in," he recalls.

Surely the creative process of something as timeless as *Earthworm Jim* went far beyond the artistic content, however. The strength of the backstory and the quality of the script must go a long way toward generating the depth of gameplay that such classics exhibit. We put the question to Perry: "No. The game didn't really have a story or a script."

Fair enough. It was just a theory.

COW LAUNCHED

Building a virtual Tate Gallery of surrealist cartoon artwork for a run-'n'-gun platform game is a great idea, but hinges on finding a programmer detached enough from reality to try and chart the elastic limits of a Mega Drive cartridge. Fortunately, Perry knew the perfect candidate, who was well known for washing his face in the experimental programming sink.

"*Earthworm Jim* was the last game I personally programmed. I miss it terribly. My office has hundreds of programming books just waiting for the day I retire from directing projects and get back to making them myself," continues Perry. And platformers certainly seemed to be his bag, as he continued: "I'd programmed a lot of platform games over the years; I had just recently done *Global Gladiators*, *Cool Spot* and *Aladdin* in a row. So I'd been trying to find ways to get the 'feel' of the games nice and tight."

Indeed, a cynic could easily write *EWJ* off as just another platform game, but it was this kind of invaluable experience, which enabled the animators to lift the worm off the screen and allow players to connect with the character.

"Back then the animation was hand drawn (with pencils!), scanned and coloured digitally. It would then pass into a compression tool, which was my secret weapon. There's a lot more animation in *Earthworm Jim* than a Mega Drive can store!" laughs Perry, looking back at the endless difficulties of programming with a distinct fondness. He continues:

"We were lucky as we had Mike Dietz as our Animation Director. He worked closely with Disney on *Aladdin* and was probably the best paper animator in the business. That said, it's not just about animating, it's about timing and finding ways to compress animations. He would do time sheets that would use frame 1, 2, 3 then 2, then 7, then 3, then 1 etc. He'd re-use old frames and draw the animation intending that to happen. So he was thinking technically too, and that made him priceless."

Standing back and looking at the entire *EWJ* project, the wealth of technical expertise infused in the game (which ran parallel with the apparently endless spaghetti string of surrealist humour) was something particularly special. Each member brought a proficiency to the table that other developers could only dream about. Perry agrees.

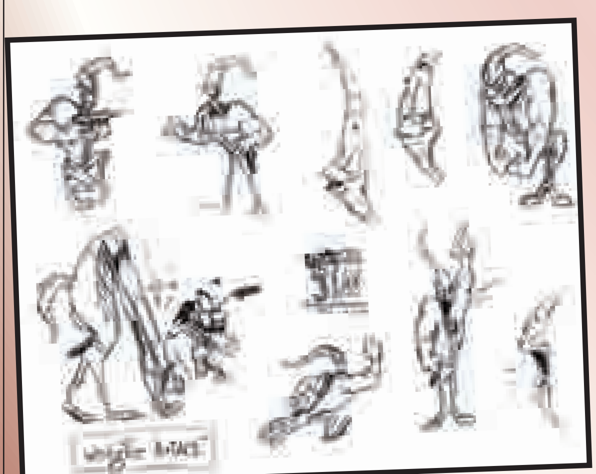
"For my previous four games, the audio was done by Tommy Tallarico. So for *Earthworm Jim* I told him to really go for it. In *Global Gladiators*, he found a way to get real guitar samples to sound like they're being played, so for *EWJ* he decided to go farther and did banjo tunes, bagpipe tunes, harmonica, and more. What you hear is an audio guy experiencing freedom and having fun."

Successfully bottling "fun", as the Shiny team had managed with their opening number, granted them the industry acclaim they deserved, but was also the ultimate cause of the company's woe. Crows were circling over Jim's head, and they weren't waiting for a cow to fall from the sky.

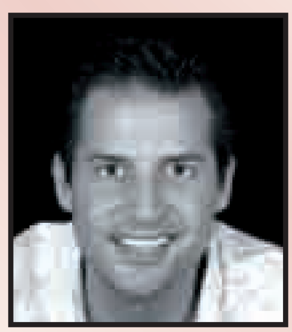
"I worked on *Earthworm Jim 2* with our other Shiny programmer Andy Astor, who did the Special Edition for Sega CD. I liked those games. I hated the stuff that Interplay, VIS and Crave did. I asked them to stop, but Interplay refused."

MAXIMUM SUCKAGE

Sequels are inevitable, but once a hungry conglomerate sets their mind on wringing every last drop of blood from the stone of a once great game,



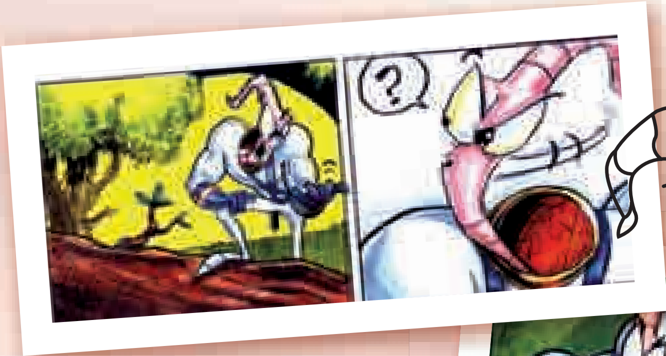
» The original design sheet for Jim's patented "Wedgie Attack".



» Programmer of *Jim* and Shiny founder (as in he founded Shiny – he's not literally polished): Dave Perry. Visit www.dperry.com to meet him in person.



» A little known "fact" is Doug TenNapel doesn't draw using pencils, but frozen worms. He sharpens them and draws really quickly before they thaw out and run away.





"DOUG AND I KEPT SAYING EVERY TIME WE MET, "LET'S REFORM THE OLD TEAM AND DO IT RIGHT" DAVE PERRY

the franchise invariably suffers. The creative team behind *EWJ* were hung out to dry and could only watch as their beloved invertebrate was homogenised, dissected and sold off piece by piece.

"I got nervous as I knew 3D was coming and my team just wasn't equipped to handle it. I tried to stick it out and started buying Silicon Graphics computers etc, but this money was out of my bank account. The team wasn't excited about 3D, so I sold my equity in Shiny to Interplay, and Interplay became responsible to pay all royalties on future sales. That's when the trouble hit. They kept making *Earthworm Jim* games, conversions and so on – none of us got paid. Still to this day.

"They still own all the *Earthworm Jim* rights. I guess that's what life is all about, you make mistakes and you learn from them," Perry muses.

While Jim's excursion into the third dimension may have been brain-freezingly uninspired, today's summery retro climate has ensured it would only be a matter of time before he crawled majestically from the earth once again. Dave told us what he knows of the PSP's recent excavation of *EWJ* soil: a project with the potential to reunite the old crew, but fell at the inter-political-corporate-mind-interference hurdle.

"Doug and I kept saying every time we met, 'Let's reform the old team and do it right'. The conversation happened again at the first Video Games Live concert at the Hollywood Bowl, so I started to make it happen. Together we convinced all the original core team members to consider reforming "the band" for an entirely new *Earthworm Jim* game.

"Atari secured the rights from Interplay and it was all go. Then in February 2006, I resigned from Shiny when Atari put all their studios up for sale. I moved onto other things, as did all the *EWJ* guys, so we really don't have anything to do with the new game. In October 2006, Shiny was bought by Foundation 9 without the *EWJ* license, so I guess Atari has another team they plan to do it with. We all look forward to playing it, though," Continues Perry. Previews have been optimistic, but it looks as though Atari's bird wasn't early enough to catch the worms that could have made all the difference.

Despite the pitfalls Jim fell into once the profit machine started rolling, Perry remains a firm fan of the awesome annelid's outlandish antics, and foresees a day when the worm will turn once again.

"I still play it to try to understand why it was a cult hit. Was it timing; was it the graphics… the humour? I'm not sure we'll ever know. I think it was probably all about the chemistry of the people that made it.

Someday, somehow, we will do this right and do this justice. When Interplay goes bankrupt, I'll try to buy the rights personally.

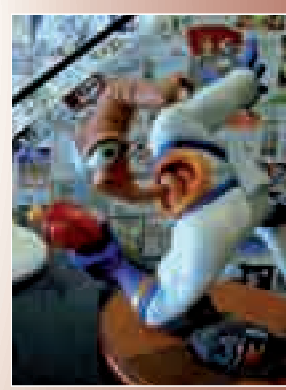
The core team stays in touch. We were soooo close to making a new game together. Maybe when I start programming again? That would be groovy!"

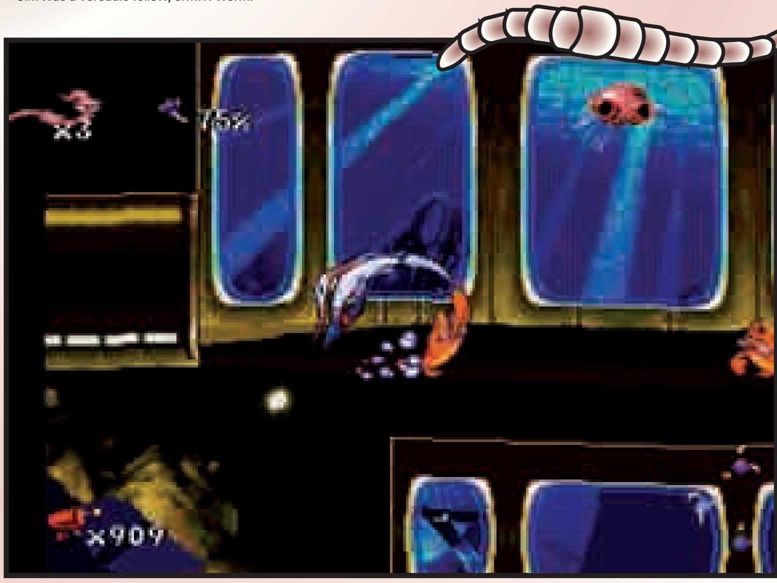


» Jim was a versatile fellow, erm… worm.

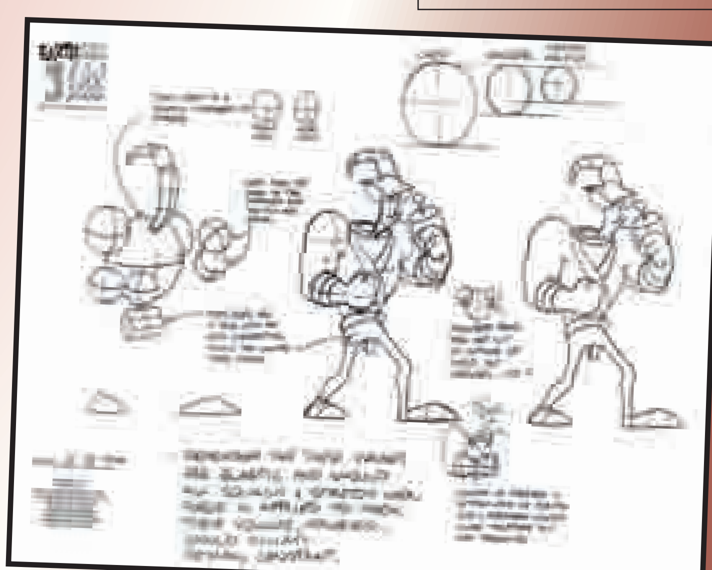
THE GAMES MASTER

Before he had his own TV show, Jim made a special appearance on the UK's first dedicated videogame program, GamesMaster (hosted by the other Dave Perry). A special level was donated by Shiny for the contestants to play, but controversy struck when the code for the demo was later leaked onto the internet. The prize (also donated by Perry) was quite fitting, considering the predicament Shiny was put in, as Perry explains:
"We made a foot-tall, hand-painted Earthworm Jim sculpture for a prize for a UK television show. Dominik Diamond was to give it away. So we mailed it off, then we got a copy of the show that aired to watch. We all nearly fell off our chairs when we saw the mangled Earthworm Jim "prize". It had been crushed in the mail, and the TV people must have assumed we'd designed it with Jim's head up his own ass. It was so funny, the look on the person's face that got the award. Thanks Fedex!"





» The animation throughout *Earthworm Jim* was superb, and gave the game masses of character.



» Even Jim's invertebrate head had detailed specifications when it came to movement.

EXOLON

IT'S SO PRETTY. KILL IT!



» **PUBLISHER:** HEWSON
» **DEVELOPER:** RAFFAELE CECCO
» **RELEASED:** 1987
» **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
» **FEATURED HARDWARE:** CPC 464
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1

HISTORY



We've played some tough little titles in our time at Retro Gamer Towers, but few have proved as challenging as Raffaele Cecco's *Exolon*.

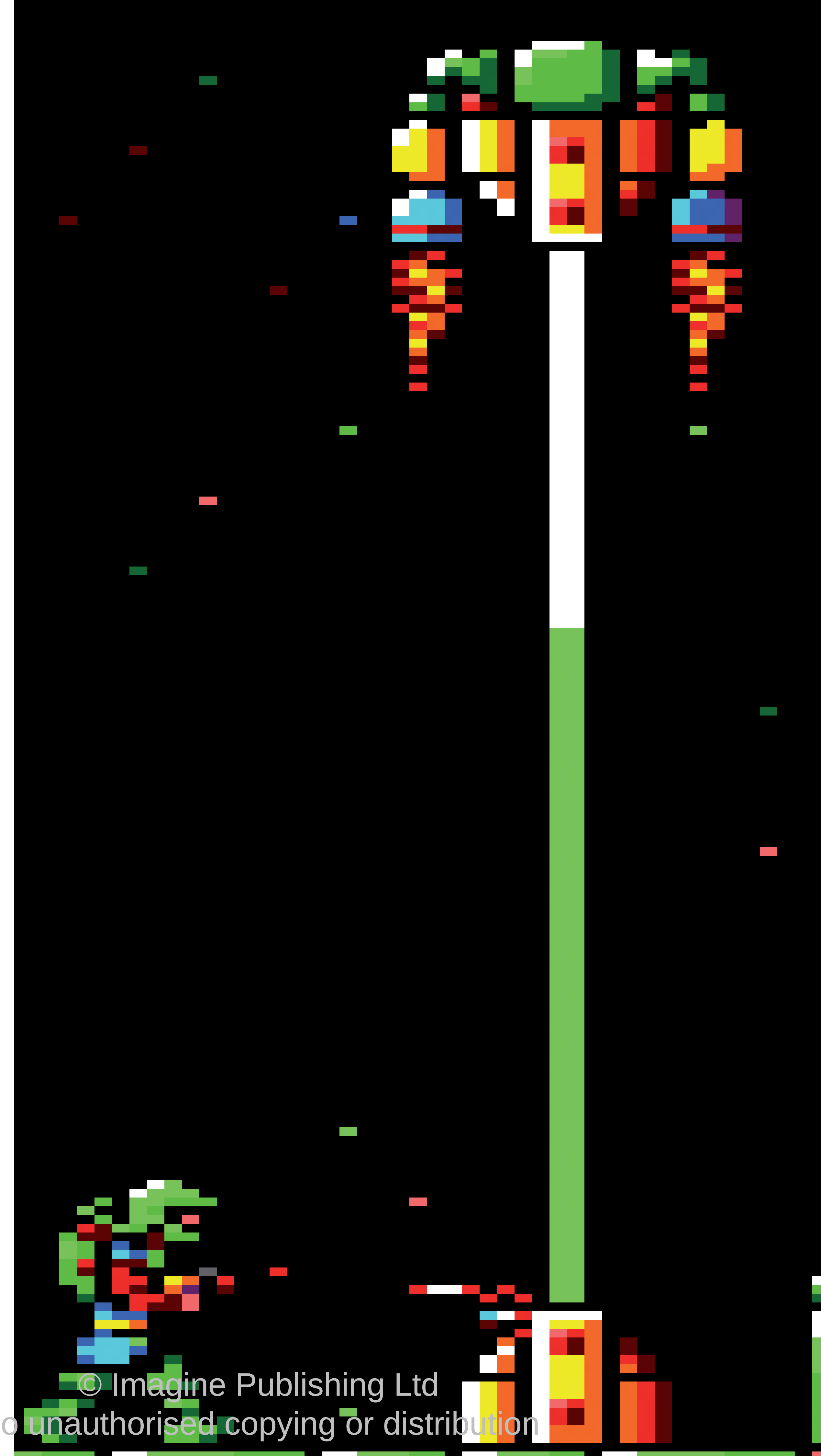
Painted in the sort of bright primary colours that wouldn't look out of place on a set of Duplo bricks, Cecco's *Exolon* is a vibrant romp through some of the most treacherous terrain to ever grace an 8-bit title.

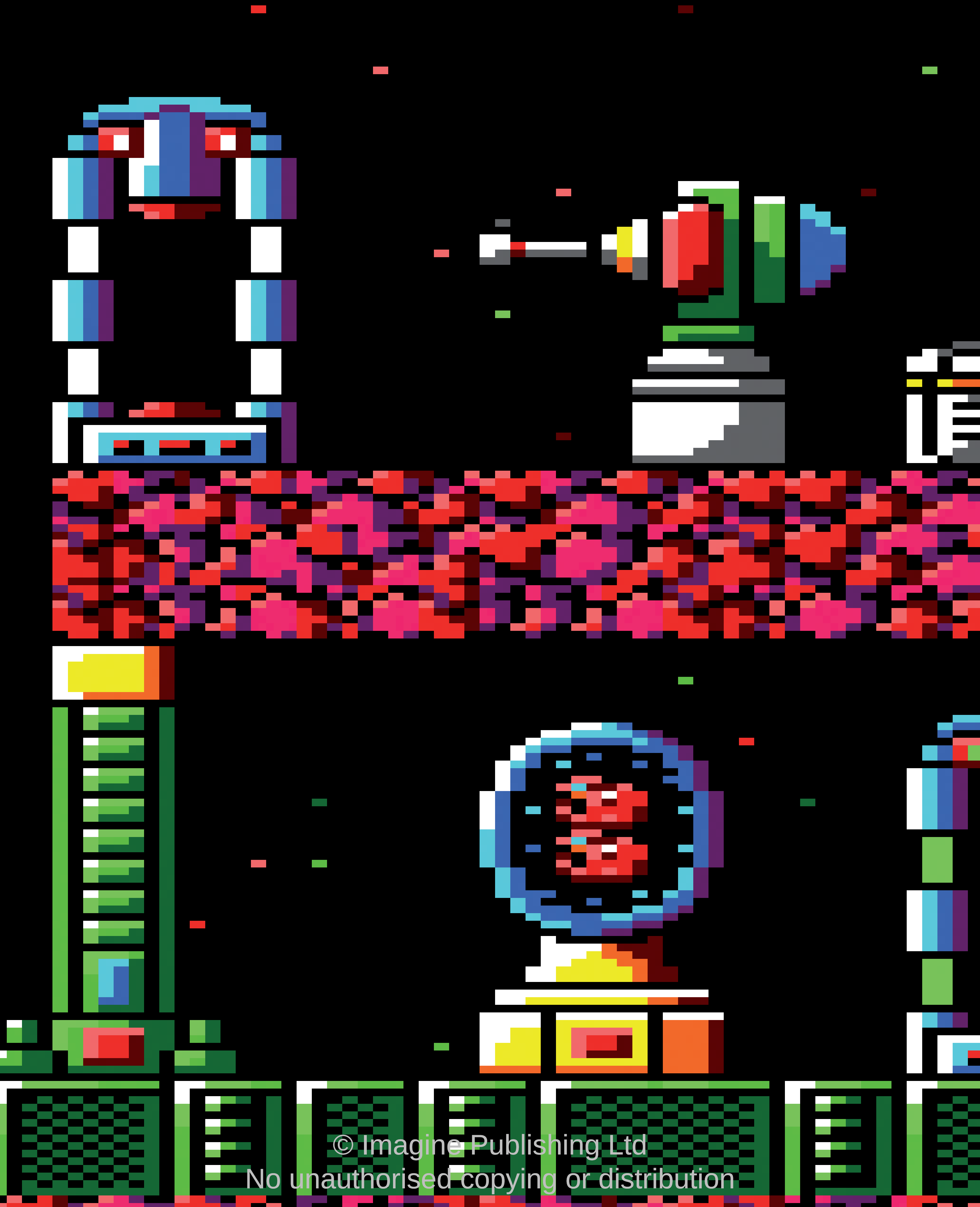
Every pixel of ground covered in *Exolon* is paid for in blood sweat and tears – yet, despite the sheer toughness of the challenge that has been thrown at you, you'd still doggedly fight your way through the gauntlet of increasingly tougher enemies, if only so you could see what Cecco had in store for you on the next screen.

As with Cecco's follow-up, *Cybernoid*, *Exolon* had a futuristic theme, but rather than having to take control of a heavily armed fighter you were cast in the boots of a powered-up space marine. Equipped with a nifty laser and a handy rocket backpack that could be activated by holding down the fire button, your soldier's task was to simply clear the many obstacles on each screen so he could eventually reach the teleporter at the end of the level.

Simple in concept maybe, but the aforementioned toughness meant this was a far from easy task and many gamers became frustrated with *Exolon*'s insistence on them having to make the sort of pixel-perfect jumps that would have made miner Willy proud. This was a task not helped by the slow leap your soldier would take whenever you pressed "up" – still, this was deep space afterall, so he was hardly going to be leaping around with all the grace of an African gazelle…

For me, *Exolon*'s difficulty was just the right side of challenging and, while it could sometimes be infuriatingly frustrating, I'd constantly find myself returning to it. Maybe I've got a higher tolerance than other gamers, or, more likely, I'm just a sucker for bright flashy graphics…









DEVELOPER LOOKBACK

BEING SENSIBLE

SENSIBLE SOFTWARE LASTED FOR 13 YEARS. TOGETHER, JON HARE AND CHRIS YATES PRODUCED SOME OF VIDEOGAMING'S FINEST TITLES, FROM WIZBALL TO CANNON FODDER TO SENSIBLE SOCCER, AND QUITE A FEW IN BETWEEN. JON TAKES DAVID CROOKES DOWN MEMORY LANE.

IN BRIEF

Jon Hare and Chris Yates meet at school and form a band. They also get jobs together at a company called LT Software. Eventually they decide there is more money in creating games, consigning their music to a hobby. They produce *Twister: Mother Of Charlotte* for System 3 before deciding to go it alone, forming Sensible Software. The pair create lots of games primarily for the Commodore 64 and Amiga, including the brilliant *Sensible Soccer*, *Wizball* and *Cannon Fodder*. But the shift to 3D games proves difficult and they eventually sell Sensi to Codemasters.

The heat was sweltering. Hundreds of sweaty people were milling around and computers were turned on all around the building. To entertain them there was a sizeable number of largely unfinished games, but putting a smile on some faces was a group of scantily clad girls. They, it seemed, had found a way to cool down. Then they began to dance. And the brows of the organisers of this 1985 PCW show began to furrow. Droplets of water swept down their faces. They had a situation on their hands and it was all too much, too vulgar.

In what would go down as one of the most memorable moments in videogaming history the girls were ushered towards the door. And, Mark Cale, the founder of fledgling publisher System 3, had just won a huge slice of publicity.

Cale had been using the girls to promote the storyline of *Twister: Mother Of Charlotte* (a change of name from the rather more controversial Mother Of Harlots), a game created by Jon Hare and Chris Yates, the soon-to-be founders of Sensible Software. The scantily-clad had long been used to attract attention and loosen purse strings in other industries but this was the first time it had been used so blatantly in videogaming.

Then again, this was a time for firsts. For it was also the first time Jon and Chris had got together as a pair to create a game.

"*Twister* was a bit controversial," admits Mr Hare. "We were asked to change the title of it because otherwise it was felt it wouldn't have made it on to the shelves of some shops if we didn't.

"And then there was the issue of the girls. Mark had this idea of getting girls with large breasts to promote the game.

"But the thing which sticks in my mind was that the show was also being used to show off *International Karate* and there were guys smashing breeze blocks with their hands.

"Shards of broken breeze blocks were littering the stage and the girls were complaining that they couldn't walk around properly in



their high heels and bare feet because it was becoming dangerous." *Twister* proved to be a landmark game for Jon and Chris although the game proved to be a let down in the sense it only made it to the Spectrum, with the Atari ST, Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC versions never having got to the finishing stages.

"To be honest, I can't quite remember why we didn't create the game for those other formats. They just didn't happen. What was most notable though was that it was the first time Chris and I had worked together on a game," says Jon. "And the money we earned from that game helped us to set up Sensible Software."

Sensible Software was created in March, 1986 and it marked a new journey for school pals Jon and Chris. The pair had left school to go to work for the same company – LT Software in Basildon – where, during the nine months they were employed there, they had produced a Spectrum version of the Commodore 64 game, *Gandalf*, called *Sodov The Sorceror*, a title greeted with moderate success.

Working as part of a team on that game they began to see their potential at creating games as well as music and their creative partnership and friendship sooned realigned itself to become a two-man start-up development team.

"We went to the same school at Great Baddow, Chelmsford, Essex, and met when we were in the fifth form", says Jon. "We were going to a Rush gig with friends. I went with a mate of mine and he went with a mate of his and both our mates knew each other.

"Chris and I ended up talking and we realised we both liked the same kinds of music. We were also in the same maths class, although I hadn't really spoken to him before that.

"We ended up forming a band together, going through loads of names – Zeus, Deus, Hamsterfish, Dark Globe (which we used for three years – it was named after a Syd Barrett track). Then we become the Amazing Technicolour Dream Globe, then finally Touchstone. Every time we changed the line-up we changed the name of the band and we kept going until about 1991.

"Initially, the music came first and games came second. But we found it hard to make a lot of money in music, so it became a hobby and the games became more important to us."

Jon's work on *Sodov The Sorceror* brought him to the attention of System 3's Cale and he was contracted to produce the graphics for the developer's *International Karate* game. Things didn't go too well and the project was later handed to Archer Maclean. He ripped the entire game apart and started again from scratch, eventually producing one of the most acclaimed games in history.

Work continued for Jon, however, mainly on converting *Skyfox*, *RMS Titanic* and *Lone Wolf* for the Spectrum. Jon and Chris then got together to produce *Twister*. Although it was not branded Sensible Software – Cale decided to rebadge it with his System 3 logo – the Sensi pair inserted a keypress which called up the Sensible Software credit.

"We were young – only 19 – and having a laugh. What wasn't funny though was that we discovered we got only 15 per cent of the money paid to LT Software for *Twister*, even though we did virtually all of the work. From that point on, we decided we would need to negotiate future deals ourselves and we made sure we didn't make the same mistake again."

ZZAP - THE GAME DIED

Sensible Soccer had a close relationship with many magazines, particularly with Zzap!64. Jon and Chris agreed to a competition in Zzap!64 in which readers were asked to think of a name for an *Elite*-style shooter with filled-in vectors initially called *The Day The Universe Died*.

"We had a good working relationship with the guys at Zzap!64 (I shared a house with Gary Liddon and Gary Penn at one time) and we thought the naming competition would be a great idea," says Jon.

"In the end though, the game died. We just decided not to continue it, which, I suppose, looking back, was a shame."

Zzap!64 and Sensible certainly did not fall out over the matter. The magazine, quite rightly, gave the Shoot Em Up Construction Kit a Gold Medal and Jon subsequently wrote a two-part guide to the utility.

"WHAT WASN'T FUNNY WAS THAT WE GOT ONLY 15 PER CENT OF THE MONEY PAID TO LT SOFTWARE FOR TWISTER, EVEN THOUGH WE DID VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE WORK"



» Although it only received 66% in *Amiga Power*, *Sensible Golf* was still a fun take on the sport.

» *Sensible Soccer* lives on in a plug-and-play format.

In actual fact, it was at this point Jon and Chris decided to make their own way in the industry. First stop – the dole.

"As soon as we finished *Twister*, we began looking at the government's enterprise scheme, which helped fledgling companies. We had to be on the dole for 13 weeks and have £1,000 each in the bank to be eligible though so we signed on and a little over three months later we got Sensible Software off the ground."

In the meantime, the pair converted *Runestone* to the C64, again for LT Software, although in the end it was never published.

Soon after setting up Sensible Software in March 1986, the pair took a demo of the work up to the Manchester-based software house, Ocean Software. It was their first attempt to sell something to a publisher and they got it signed up that same day.

"It was pretty much an immediate success for us," recalls Jon. "It was a great break so we signed, even though it was a terrible contract. We knew no better in those days."

"We finished that game – *Parallax* – over six months. It was our first proper Sensible game but, in hindsight, we rushed the end of it. The adventure side of the game could have been bigger.

"We wanted to do more, but time and memory just held us back."

After they completed *Parallax*, they knocked out a game for Firebird (where, incidentally, Jon met his wife, Irene), a budget release called *Galaxibirds*. It was a joke version of the arcade game *Galaxian;* the player had to shoot strange-looking geese and other birds. The pair wrote the game purely as a laugh and it went down as one of the stupidest – yet weirdly enjoyable – Commodore 64 games of all time.

"The budget games were rattled off in a week," says Jon. "They were fun side projects and they were not worth putting too much time into. We just had an idea – like putting birds into *Galaxian* – and did it. It was not academic or deep or anything like that."

Such humour and a can-do attitude became a hallmark of Sensible Software, but their next release was a serious one – at least in terms of the attention it received. Again working with Ocean, the Sensible pair created *Wizball*. And it was a smash hit.

Released in 1987, the game was made for the C64 – with music by Martin Galway – and it was later ported to the Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Amiga, Atari ST and PC.

It was a unique, horizontally-scrolling game in which you played Wiz, a character that had magically managed to place himself inside a ball with the aim of restoring colour to Wizworld: a land that had been left grey by the evil wizard Zark. The aim of the game was to collect droplets of paint to colour the levels; the paint drops were then collected by your cat Nifta, travelling alongside you in a ball called the catalite. With lots of power-ups and aliens to shoot, it became a complex, involving game. Zzap!64 gave it 96% – and later went on to name it as the best game of the decade.

Jon says: "The concept of *Wizball* started with Chris, who created the control method and worked out the physics of the game. The colour thing was my idea and we had lots of discussions about how to make it two-player co-op. That is how we ended up with the cat idea. The idea was to create a game that would allow the player to adventure around the level a bit. We wanted the player to wander. If truth be told, though, our later game *Wizkid* contained the elements of adventure that we wanted to achieve with *Wizball*."

The success of both *Parallax* and *Wizball* had not gone unnoticed by Sensible. Jon and Chris used them to promote their next release, the Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit, with the box screaming: "By the programmers of *Wizball* and *Parallax*". The construction kit, which became known as SEUCK for short, was a dream for many wannabe programmers owning a C64 or Amiga. It allowed for the creation of simple shoot-'em-up games, giving the user a background editor, sprite designer, special effects composer, animation facilities and anything they needed to put a title together.

It spawned thousands of games – some poor, some ending up on shop shelves. But it is fair to say that the C64 version was able

DARLING, THEY WERE GREAT

When Codemasters snapped up *Sensible Soccer* in 1999, Richard and David Darling knew exactly what they were getting: a quality back catalogue. David Darling explains: "We'd always been really impressed with the quality of the Sensible games. They were such fun to play and the team had a lot of flair and creativity. The gameplay of their games was great. We knew Jon Hare and had a lot of respect for what he and the team achieved."

So what was David's favourite game? "For me it was *Sensible Soccer*," he says. "I still talk to people now and they are so enthusiastic about how *Sensible Soccer* was the best soccer game and had them hooked."

He added: "Jon Hare and the team were great personalities, very creative – like a rock 'n' roll band. They had fun making games and loved games and it showed through clearly.

"We're proud to have acquired such an amazing back catalogue. We've put them onto various formats, the Game Boy and mobile phones. "I think they are such classics, they'll be around for a long time to come."

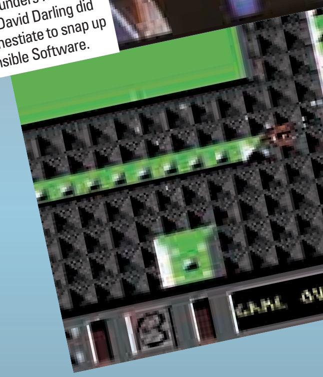


» Jon Hare and Chris Yates' first game together was *Twister: Mother Of Charlotte* for System 3.

» *Sensible World Of Soccer* is set to be launched on Xbox 360 Live Arcade.



» Codemasters co-founders Richard and David Darling did not hestiate to snap up Sensible Software.



to produce some decent games. It had collision checks between the player sprite and the background, something that was missing from the Amiga version (which was not programmed by Sensible). The Amiga version also had jerky sprites, poor scrolling, dodgy collision detection and a lack of artificial intelligence.

"It was just an idea we had and we ran with it," says Jon. "It started as a game but became a utility and we think it was pretty good. It certainly caught people's imagination."

Following SEUCK, the Sensible lads knocked out another budget game, again for Firebird's budget label. Called *Oh No!*, the game was a simple affair in which you played an ox breeder protecting your herd from alien rustlers in a decent, but not amazing, shooter.

It enabled Sensible Software to keep the money rolling in until they had their next idea. And it was one that 40-year-old Jon, a Norwich City fan, had wanted to create for years.

He says: "Chris and I were – still are – interested in football and both play it a bit. And we both liked a game called *Tehkan World Cup*. We drew all our inspiration for our next game from this."

That game was *Microprose Soccer* for the C64 and it closely resembled the 1985 arcade release, *Tehkan World Cup*: a top-down viewed game which had a large trackball and single fire button. By swiping the trackball and hitting fire in *Tehkan*, you could control the direction and velocity of the ball. Sensible Software took the same top-down view and worked on the physics of football to produce a version for home computers, albeit making use of a simple joystick.

And it had everything any self-respecting C64 owner would hope for: speed, rain (allowing for great sliding tackles), and the concept of aftertouch, allowing you to swerve the ball after you had kicked it.

More importantly, it inspired many football games and became a landmark title. Here was a game that allowed you to replay every goal and see almost everything going on around you on the pitch.

"We thought the top-down view was the best way of approaching a soccer game," says Jon. "It makes it easier for the player to aim and if the goal is in front of you and you can see the frame, it gives you something to aim for.

"I think we did it well. C+VG called it the 'Best Sports Game On Any Format Ever'."

Two years later and Sensible Software continued the sporting theme, releasing *International 3D Tennis* – "It was bizarre, the strangest game we've ever done," laughs Jon. The game was the first Sensible had produced for the 16-bits and it had the player controlling a wire-frame player. Despite the strange looks, the game played extremely well and the sprites were surprisingly fluid. And with ten different camera angles and a great two-player mode, this was yet another Sensible hit.

It was followed up by *Insects In Space* for the C64, which started a period of problems for Sensible Software. Jon and Chris created *Insects In Space* – a budget game in which you shot bugs trying to kidnap babies – over two months at the end of 1988.

Hewson made an offer for the game almost immediately and it was due to release it on its Rack-It label. But just as it was about to hit the shops, Hewson pulled the label and instead stuck the game on a compilation called *4th Dimension*.

Soon, Jon and Chris were to experience their first serious set of business problems with their next wave of games developed for the 16-bit machines.

"WE THOUGHT THE TOP-DOWN VIEW WAS BEST. I THINK WE DID IT WELL. C+VG CALLED IT THE 'BEST SPORTS GAME ON ANY FORMAT EVER'"



» Jon Hare worked with Codemasters on a new soccer game, *Sensible Soccer 2006*.

» *Sensible Soccer* and *Cannon Fodder* made it to mobile phones, courtesy of Jon Hare's new company Tower Studios.



The pair had signed a deal with Mirrorsoft, allowing it to publish *Mega Lo Mania*, *Cannon Fodder* and *Sensible Soccer*. At the time Mirrorsoft was a major publisher, the software house arm of the Robert Maxwell empire, the man who used to own The Mirror newspaper (and who mysteriously died on 5 November, 1991 when he fell overboard from his luxury yacht, Lady Ghislane, leaving a huge pensions crisis in his wake). Mirrorsoft began to fall on hard times in the early Nineties and then it disappeared altogether, a lack of money and support getting the better of it.

Jon recalls: "Mirrorsoft went bust just after *Mega Lo Mania* was released. Our big mistake was that we'd also signed *Cannon Fodder* and Sensible Soccer to the company as well.

"When the mess died down, we found we had lost 75 per cent of our turnover and the first quarter of our *Mega Lo Mania* royalties.

"People then tried to claim our intellectual property as their own. They wanted to keep *Cannon Fodder* and *Sensible Soccer* too.

"It made us wake up. From that point on, we ensured we controlled our IP and had it written into contracts that it was ours. Luckily, we managed to salvage *Sensible Soccer* and *Cannon Fodder* from the wreckage. It was a hard time for the industry. There were lots of people in that room with the administrators trying to rescue their money – Probe and the Bitmap Brothers for example. Some were owed lots of money. We eventually sold *Cannon Fodder* on to Virgin and *Sensible Soccer* on to Renegade."

One game that was not affected was *Wizkid*, the sequel to *Wizball*. That was signed to Ocean. *Wizkid* picked up where *Wizball* left off. The player assumed the role of the disembodied head of *Wizkid*, flying around the screen, knocking various objects on top of enemies to kill them.

"*Wizkid* turned out the way we wanted *Wizball*," says Jon. "We often developed our ideas as we went along.

"There are some companies which do lots of market research that comes up with what you should and shouldn't do. Chris and I, though, well we just didn't care what anyone else was doing. We were quite arrogant and we just thought it didn't matter about the competition, we'd do it better anyway. So that's how we developed our ideas and came up with games like *Wizkid* and *Wizball*.

"I've also found that people who worry about what others are doing don't do well themselves. We went ahead like we were in a band – we got an idea and just waited to see what happened."

It was this approach that saw the development of their next football title. Four years after *Microprose Soccer*, Jon and Chris felt it was time to produce an updated version. And *Sensible Soccer* was born. The game – called *Sensi* for short – was a 2D affair that appeared on the Amiga and Atari ST in 1992, later being converted to the PC and Mega Drive and many other platforms. The top-down view, tiny sprites, made-up player names and fictitious football teams may have been off-putting to some, but it was addictive and had gamers pinballing the ball from player to player, setting up wonderful goals in fast, furious, end-to-end matches.

It spawned a sequel, *Sensible World Of Soccer*, in 1994 – by far the better game – adding decent management elements for an all-round package.

But even *Sensible Soccer* was meddled with. By the time *Sensible Soccer '98* arrived, heralding a move into the 3D era for the franchise, fans cried foul and the series faded away like a wounded old pro (only recently did we see a comeback, with *Sensible Soccer 2006* for the Xbox, PlayStation 2 and PC).

Sensible Soccer, in short, saw the best and worst times for Jon and Chris. "*Sensible Soccer* is our most successful game," says Jon. "In terms of kudos too it's our number one, followed, I think, by *Cannon Fodder* and *Wizball*.

"It drew inspiration from *Microprose Soccer*, which, as I've said was inspired by *Tehkan*. And, at the time it came out, we were enjoying our best years. It was a period when we released *Mega Lo Mania*, *Wizkid*, *Sensible Soccer*, *Cannon Fodder* and *Sensible*

THE NO SHOWS

There were a few cancelled *Sensible* games, the most notable examples being *Touchstone*, *Have A Nice Day* and the ground-breaking *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll*.

This latter game hit major problems when GT Software, which had acquired the publishing rights after snapping up Warner Interactive Entertainment, found the game to be too risque. Sensible could not sell it to other publishers either so it languished in gaming hell. "We were trying to pre-empt 3D," says Jon Hare. "*Sex 'N' Drugs* had three hours of pre-rendered animation in it and it was expensive to make at the time, involving lots of man power and organisation. With hindsight, we needed two or three extra strong programmers."

Touchstone was a big RPG project but Origin, which was going to publish the game, eventually decided to call a halt to it in November 1989, believing the market was turning to consoles. *Have A Nice Day* was earmarked for the PlayStation as an FPS. It had technical problems, primarily with the 3D and was canned.



» If only Parallax was remade for the PSP, it would be amazing.

» Sensi

SOFTOGRAPHY
1986-2000

1986
Twister: Mother Of Charlotte (Spectrum)
Parallax (C64)
Galaxibirds (C64)

1987
Wizball (Spectrum, C64)
Shoot-Em-Up Construction Kit (C64, Amiga)

1988
Oh No! (C64)
Microprose Soccer (Spectrum, C64)

1990
International 3D Tennis (Spectrum, C64, Amiga, Atari ST)
Insects In Space (C64)
Mega Lo Mania (Atari ST, Amiga, MegaDrive, SNES, DOS)

1992
Wizkid (Atari ST, Amiga)
Sensible Soccer (Atari ST, Amiga, DOS, SNES)
Sensible Soccer International Edition (Atari ST, Amiga, Amiga CD32)
Sim Brick (Amiga)

1993
Sensible Soccer 92/93 (Atari ST, Amiga)
Cannon Fodder (Atari ST, Amiga, DOS, Archimedes)

1994
Cannon Fodder 2 (Amiga, DOS)
Sensible Golf (Amiga, DOS)
Sensible World Of Soccer (Amiga, DOS)

1995
Sensible World Of Soccer 95/96 (Amiga, DOS)
Sensible Train Spotting (Amiga)

1996
Sensible World Of Soccer European Championship Edition (Amiga, DOS)
Sensible World Of Soccer 96/97 (Amiga, DOS)

1998
Sensible World of Soccer 98 (DOS, Windows 9x)

1999
Sensible Soccer 98 European Club Edition (PlayStation, Windows 9x)

2000
Cannon Fodder (Game Boy Colour)

Golf all in quick succession. And in 1992 and 1993 we were named Developer Of The Year two years running.

"We were getting decent royalties and contracts – something we had begun to achieve pretty much from the moment we began to create for the Amiga. And it's fair to say that between 1991 and 1995 we just couldn't make mistakes. It was perfect – lots of cash, lots of creative control, good people, good times."

From the mid-Nineties, however, the industry was moving towards 3D. By this time, Sensible Software had six staff: Jon and Chris, lead programmers Chris Chapman (*Mega Lo Mania, Sensible Soccer* and *SWOS*), Julian Jameson (*Cannon Fodder I* and *II* and *Sensible Golf*), Dave Korn (who converted the 16-bit versions of *International 3D Tennis* and did some support programming on Sensible Soccer) and artist Stoo Cambridge (*Cannon Fodder I* and *II, Sensible Golf* and *SWOS*) and they had moved from the Cambridgeshire town of March to Saffron Walden, Essex but it was not enough to lead them into the new era.

"The move to 3D was innovative stuff, but we missed the boat by a couple of years and were too slow to react," says Jon.

"I think we were one of the last companies in Europe to move from 2D and when we did we were not very efficient with it. You can't do 3D with six people. We also began to hit other problems as we started to expand. We realised we couldn't deal with middle management or manage large teams. We were too used to doing it all. Chris and I even make tea and we were rubbish at delegating.

"In the end, we took on too much. People offered us really good money and we'd agree to do the jobs, but we ended up making things like *Sensi 98* which were not great."

Things began coming to a head and the Sensible Software lads realised something had to change. The world was becoming more commercial and making games suddenly became very expensive.

"Football was becoming more commercialised and licence-oriented," Jon exclaims. "It was more risky to take a game like *Sensible Soccer* and create teams that had similar names to the real thing.

"We were also finding that far from being able to maintain the 49 per cent average profit margins, which we had made during the 13-year period running from 1986 to 1999, we were now looking at having to expand our company to compete and to take more risks than we were used to for profit margins of as little as 10 per cent to 20 per cent.

"When you're in a position that you own your own house and stuff, you do start to see things as a risk.

"So we sat down and made a decision. We sold to Codemasters. We played a simple game and cut our costs. We got out while we were still up.

"We selected Codemasters as our prime target. We liked what we saw with them and there was no one else we wanted to sell to."

That was in 1999. The Sensible era drew to a close having created no fewer than seven number one games in the UK over 13 years, scooping many industry awards in the process.

Jon went on to design many games for Codemasters, including various versions of *Sensible Soccer* and *Cannon Fodder*.

"I have no room to complain," he surmises. "We ran the company in the way we wanted and created some great games. I enjoyed all aspects of my time running Sensible. It was great to be able to be so creative and successful and it was just as much fun securing the contracts; we learnt the rules, we played the game, and had a feel for what we were doing. I'm proud of what we achieved."

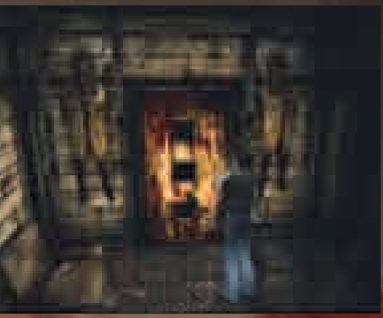


» Jon Hare, the creator of one of the greatest footy games ever made.

"WE RAN THE COMPANY IN THE WAY WE WANTED AND CREATED SOME GREAT GAMES"



THE CLASSIC GAME
SILENT HILL



» Masked bodies suspended, almost crucified on wires, is a recurring theme in *Silent Hill*.

Haunted House, Alone In The Dark, and Resident Evil – three major survival horrors which birthed and evolved the concept. Then suddenly in 1999, some viewing it as bandwagon jumping, Konami gave the genre a darker shade of depravity through Silent Hill. Let's return to that town, a nightmarish place of burned children, satanic cults, and a malevolence which lurks behind the shadows.

The first *Silent Hill* is the best and the scariest in the entire series. Some controversial statements are opinion, others, such as the one which started this article, are fact. The original's superiority over its follow-ups is the direct result of its limitations; it joins the short list of retro games which are excellent mainly by virtue of their age, and the ingrained facets which result from this. The restrictions of the hardware are what today put this game above its rivals. Let's be crudely blunt here, the grainy, dirty polygon-textures of the first game are honestly more likely to scare the shit out of you than the smoother refined visuals of the sequels. It's one thing to see clearly-defined super-shiny monsters, but it's far more unnerving when the thing you're looking at appears as if it's washed its face with a bundle of rusted razor wire.

Another result of the technical limitations was fogging, even indoors – which was maintained for the sequels despite more powerful hardware. Everything in the original *Silent Hill* is swathed in either grey mist or darkness. The fog exists in the "real" world, hiding the roaming skinless dogs and other enemies from view, while the inky black of night occurs in the nightmarish alternate reality of the town. It is this other world where most people's fear comes from, as the protagonist, Harry Mason, again and again has to force himself through the horrors of this most unnatural of places. Every surface is encrusted with what appears to be rust, or blood, and the walls are often replaced with barbed wire and chain link fences.

For those that have seen it, the depraved filth-saturated atmosphere, plus other elements of *Silent Hill*, are taken directly from the film *Jacob's Ladder*. Watching this flick, which stars Tim Robbins, it's quite astounding just how much Team Silent borrowed. But there's no attempt to hide various influences, and in fact *Silent Hill* openly boasts of its source material by naming various streets after horror writers and other things connected to surreal and scary forms of media (there are several *Twin Peaks* references, which, along with several of Lynche's creations, was also a major influence for the games).

Another of *Silent Hill*'s strengths was its use of sound and audio cues – this again follows the limitations theme. Enemies could not easily be seen, because of the limited draw distance, and so to alert you to their presence a special radio was available. Later games reused the idea, but at the time it was an ingenious decision, and the sheer terror created by the white noise that crackled



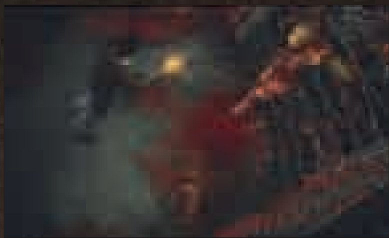
» A tank of gasoline! A tank of gasoline! My kingdom for a tank of gasoline!

THE FIRST SILENT HILL IS THE BEST AND THE SCARIEST IN THE ENTIRE SERIES. IT'S BECAUSE OF THE GRAINY, DIRTY POLYGON-TEXTURES

IN THE KNOW



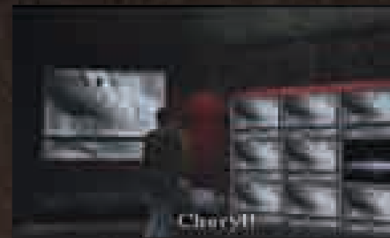
- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1999
- » **GENRE:** SURVIVAL HORROR
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5



» What the hell is happening? This hideously deformed and crucified figure marks the opening of the game.



» This opening scene in the diner sets up and reveals the importance of the radio.



» Suddenly, whilst in the mall, these TV screens come to life and echo the cries of Harry's lost daughter. It's quite chilling.



» This is the deformed serpent boss. But look to the right. Notice the human body engulfed in flames? Creepy.

TERROR IS ALWAYS MORE COMPLETE WHEN COUPLED WITH THE UNCOMFORTABLE REALISATION THAT THERE IS NO HOPE

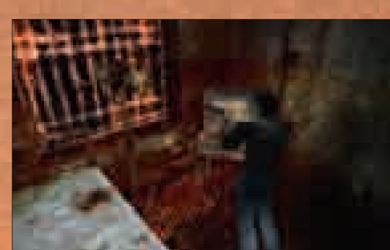
out of it was palpable. The sound nurtured a Pavlovian response, where even if enemies can't (or don't exist) the sound of the radio causes an adrenaline spike; at one curdling point, there are invisible ghost children which, while not causing any actual harm, cause the radio to scream static wildly. There is also the sound of random banging and scraping on the walls, as if the abyss' unnatural spawn were trying to break through, into your mind. It's deeply unsettling.

At every opportunity it evokes powerful negative emotions in the player. Later on when discovering a motorbike, shrouded in darkness, and finding that it's out of petrol, you want to fall to the ground crying, screaming at the TV, begging for just one canister of gasoline so as to escape the nightmare. Faced with such hopelessness and despair, you instead hold the sawn-off shotgun close to your chest and, with a demented glint in a twitching eye, vow that if hell is about to consume you, you'll go down firing and laughing like a deranged psychopathic madman on the edge. Terror is always more complete when coupled with the uncomfortable realisation that there is no hope. *Silent Hill* is always bleak, even with its happiest of endings, and the fact the main protagonist seems trapped in a looping never-ending nightmare (not to mention being on the verge of insanity) makes it seem all the more futile. The inescapability of replayed scenarios lends things a gloriously abhorrent kind of nihilism. Playing it today it's slow, linear, has convoluted puzzles, and is very clunky. Combat is imprecise, difficult, with limited ammo and too many melee weapons. The whole thing has a giddy surrealism to it, as you fight moths, slugs and giant lizards. But these things must be accepted as intentional and, once acknowledged, the game is still as terrifying and disturbing as it ever was. It was never about combat; Harry Mason is a writer and it's logical that he would have more success running from, than confronting evil. The vague and disorientating puzzles were needed; they helped convey the otherworldly location you had descended into.

The same goes for the bosses, which were a stark contrast to the demonic "general enemies" found throughout. While games like *Resident Evil* had a cohesive internal logic with regards to puzzles and bosses, *Silent Hill* meandered about like a chimpanzee drunk on meths, nauseas and dizzy, forcing you to stumble without being able to catch your balance afterwards. The bosses did not appear as if they belonged, which was a jolt to the system, confusing, unnatural in a world which was already an aberration – it begged the question, was Harry Mason simply going insane? It of course has problems, but *Silent Hill* uses such a focused (though admittedly borrowed) visual style, and carries it off with such momentum, that it makes for a thrilling dip into chilling and murky waters. And, as we've said, the first is still the best.



» This is precisely what we mean. Large, chunky and pixelated visuals. Filthy and rust-covered, everything conveys a sense of foreboding.



» We've always found the unsanitary conditions of the hospital to be deeply unsettling.

THE KIDS AREN'T ALRIGHT

Censorship of the media. It's a practice employed by tyrannical governments and nefarious agencies wishing to control and manipulate the public consciousness – keeping us passive, and receptive. Pushing us ever deeper into the Orwellian dystopia we are currently in, is the UK version of *Silent Hill*. While both the US and Japanese releases retained all their original content, as its creators intended, when the game hit Britannia's censorship-besieged shores it lost one of its main monsters. The Grey Children (pictured), which inhabit the school, were removed. They were ungodly-looking monsters which wielded knives, and apparently the ominous noise they make is the sound of children laughing, digitally slowed down. They freaked the hell out of us. They were replaced with Mumblers, strange brown dwarven monsters with claws, which weren't nearly as disturbing. So if you're going to play *Silent Hill*, make sure you get the US version. Failing that, join a guerrilla movement and overthrow the UK's oppressive government. Down with censorship, freedom of expression for all!



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

GENSO SUIKODEN
SYSTEMS: PS1, SATURN
YEAR: 1995

LEGEND OF THE MYSTICAL NINJA
SYSTEMS: SNES
YEAR: 1991

TOKIMEKI MEMORIAL
SYSTEMS: PC ENGINE
YEAR: 1994



Pokémon

Introducing
The World's
Favourite Videogame
series







» Snorlax remains a firm *Pokémon* favourite.

POKÉMON HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR GAME FRANCHISES EVER CREATED. RETRO GAMER TAKES AN IN-DEPTH LOOK BACK AT THE GAMES THAT STARTED IT ALL: POKÉMON RED AND POKÉMON BLUE. FROM SATOSHI TAJIRI'S ORIGINAL MASTERPIECES THROUGH THE GLOBAL PHENOMENON AND UP TO THE PRESENT DAY, THE POKÉMON LEGEND IS ABOUT TO UNFOLD…



On 27 February 1996, two monochrome Game Boy games called *Pocket Monsters Green* and *Pocket Monsters Red* were released inconspicuously into the Japanese market. Following their unprecedented popularity, *Pokémon Red* and *Pokémon Blue* made the leap to America two years later and found Europe in 1999, where they enjoyed just as rapturous a reception. Now, just over ten years later, the *Pokémon* games have sold over 143 million copies across six different platforms. This makes it the second bestselling game franchise of all time, coming in just behind Nintendo's own *Mario* series, which has sold about 200 million units in 20 years (compared to *Pokémon*'s ten).

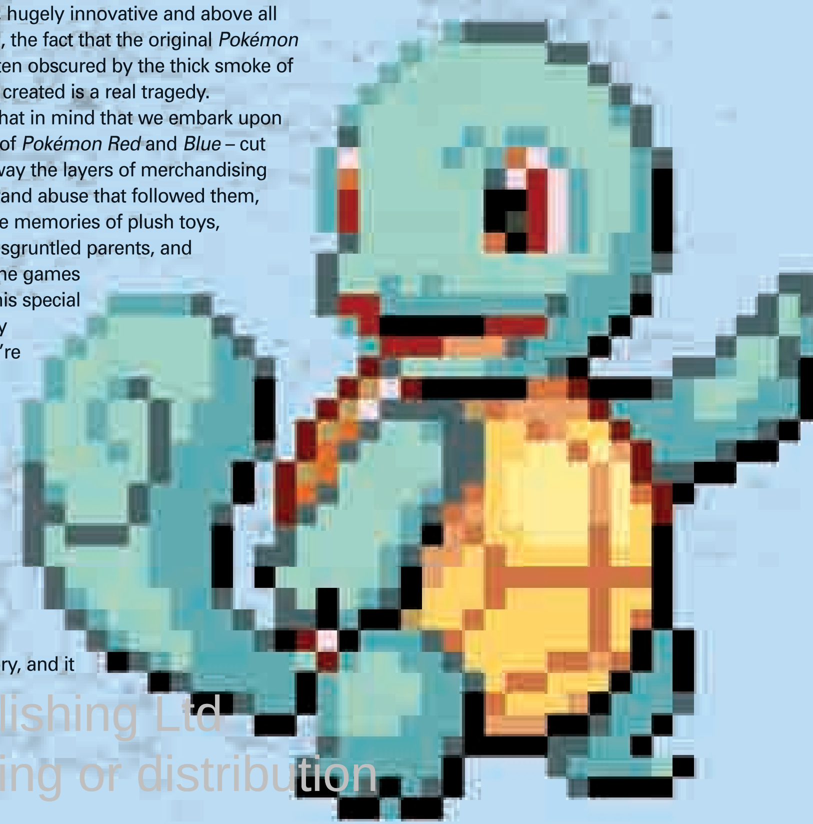
Outside of the videogaming world, we don't need to tell you how influential the brand became – so prevalent and universally popular was the franchise that an entire generation of American, Japanese and European children grew up with *Pokémon* and its colourful, likeable characters as motifs of their childhoods. In the ten years since its original release, *Pokémon* characters have graced everything from lunchboxes to jet planes and starred in everything from their own RPGs to *Super Smash Bros* to television shows. Few other brands have proved so enduringly popular over the years, and though it could be said that *Pokémon*'s popularity bubble popped several years ago, current game sales and gamer culture would suggest otherwise.

Last year, *Pokémon Fire Red* and *Leaf Green*, remakes of the two original games, were released and became two of the biggest-selling videogame remakes ever, proving that in the minds and hearts of gamers around the world (not to mention the millions of children who grew up watching the television series, playing the games and buying the trading cards), *Pokémon* has formed a strong nostalgic bond.

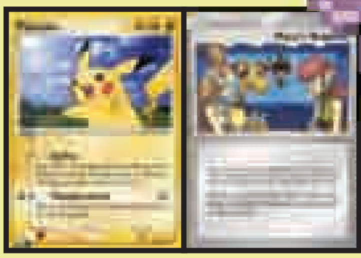
Without a doubt, it was the original games that captured our imaginations and sent the franchise skyrocketing in popularity. *Pokémon*, at heart, was a coming-of-age story, and its themes of friendship, rivalry, dedication and reward were as instrumental in building the series' popularity as the amenable characters and addictive 'gotta-catch-'em-all' premise. Deeply personal, hugely innovative and above all greatly involving, the fact that the original *Pokémon* games are so often obscured by the thick smoke of the fad that they created is a real tragedy.

And it's with that in mind that we embark upon this re-visitation of *Pokémon Red* and *Blue* – cut the crap, strip away the layers of merchandising and relentless brand abuse that followed them, dispense with the memories of plush toys, keychains and disgruntled parents, and concentrate on the games themselves. In this special tenth anniversary retro feature, we're going beyond the cultural phenomenon and looking instead to its source – *Pokémon* is one of the most important, influential and brilliant series in videogame history, and it









KEN SUGIMORI

AS LEAD ARTIST on the *Pokémon* project, Ken Sugimori was perhaps as instrumental to *Pokémon's* success as Satoshi Tajiri himself. A long-term friend of Tajiri from the days of their Game Freak fanzine, Sugimori was single-handedly responsible for the drawing and design of the first 251 Pokémon – from the Game Boy Advance generation onwards, other artists helped to design the monsters. He also designed the games' main characters: Professor Oak and the soon-to-be-iconic Gym Leaders. He also helped to bring the *Pokémon* characters into 3D with *Super Smash Bros* and *Pokémon Snap* and drew much of the artwork for the first set of Pokémon trading cards. It was Sugimori's lovable creations whose faces were plastered all over the world – it was his distinctive and lively art style that made *Pokémon's* characters so very appealing.





WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

As a child growing up in the Sixties, Satoshi Tajiri loved to collect insects. In fact he was obsessive about it. His peers at school gave him the nickname 'Dr Bug', and he spent his youth hunting down insects in fields, woods and ponds. He also loved the arcade and spent many of his teenage years there, while the countryside he had loved as a child was paved and built over. It was a desire to pass on the experience of hunting bugs that he enjoyed so much in his childhood, as well as a real passion for game technology, that led Tajiri to come up with the *Pokémon* concept.

In a very rare interview with TIMEasia magazine in 1999 (one of only about three interviews that the reclusive developer has ever given), Tajiri talks about his love of bug hunting and the creativity he managed to inject into his pastime. "[Bugs] fascinated me. For one thing, they kind of moved funny. They were odd. Every time I found a new insect, it was mysterious to me. And the more I searched for insects, the more I found. If I put my hand in the river, I would get a crayfish. If there was a stick over a hole, it would create an air bubble and I'd find insects there. I usually took them home. As I gathered more and more, I'd learn about them, like how some would feed on one another. So I stopped bringing them home. But I liked coming up with new ideas, like how to catch beetles. In Japan, a lot of kids like to go out and catch beetles by putting honey on a piece of tree bark. My idea was to put a stone under a tree, because they slept during the day and like sleeping under stones. So in the morning I'd go pick up the stone and find them. Tiny discoveries like that made me excited."

Asked if he ever shared the experience with friends – as people share the *Pokémon* experience with each other – his answer gives yet more insight into the mindset behind the catch-'em-all premise of the games. "None of my friends would do what I did. I got more insects than anyone."

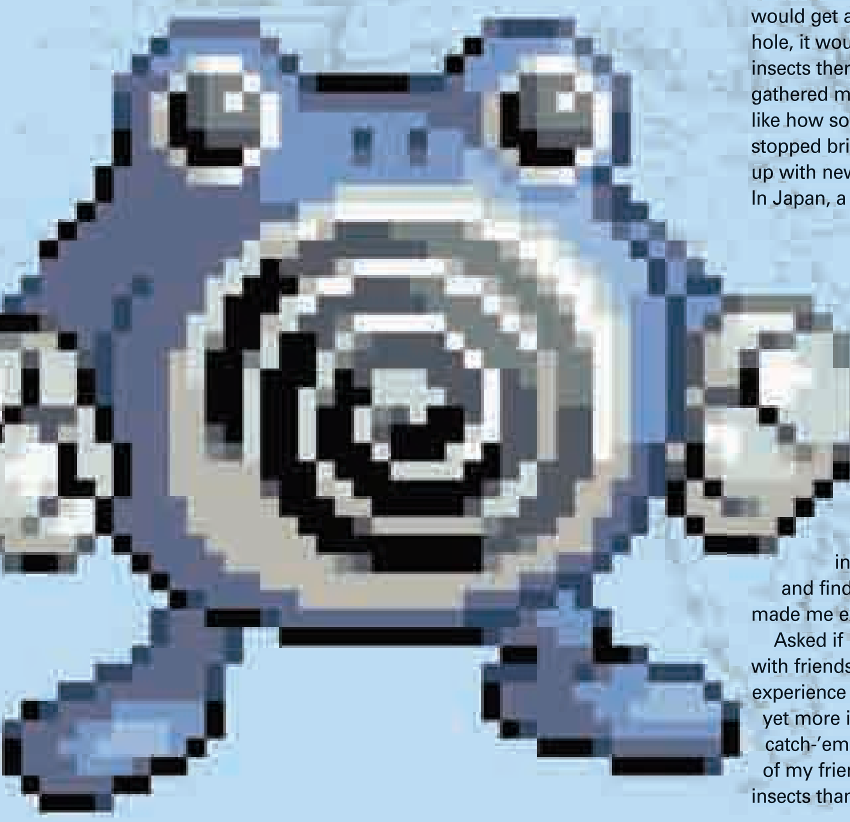
The name of Tajiri's game developer, Game Freak, came from the name of a magazine that he and his friends set up as teenagers. "I was really into *Space Invaders* in about 1978. It got me more and more interested in videogames. There wasn't any media to get information about games, so I came up with Game Freak magazine. It was handwritten. I stapled the pages together." He created his first game, *Quinty*, when he was just 16-years-old, as an entry in a Sega-sponsored competition, and he learned programming by taking his NES apart to see how it worked. It has recently been alleged that Tajiri suffers from Asperger's syndrome, which would tally with his eccentric reputation and obsessive dedication to his work – he works on a '24 hours awake, 12 hours asleep' schedule when working on a game, and he did so right from *Pokémon Red* and *Blue* through to *Ruby* and *Sapphire*.

Pokémon was a concept in his mind, then, for quite a long time, but it was his discovery of Nintendo's Game Boy in 1991, and specifically the link cables, that drove him to pitch the game to the company. "The communication aspect of Game Boy was a profound image to me. It has a communication cable. In *Tetris* – its first game – the cable transmitted information about moving blocks. That cable really got me interested. I thought of actual living organisms moving back and forth across the cable. But everyone was using it to compete. The idea I had was for information to go back and forth. It wasn't about competition. I wanted to design a game that involved interactive communication."

Tajiri never even imagined that Nintendo would accept his pitch. "I was told they couldn't really understand the concept of the game. Game Boy's popularity was declining. Just when I finished the game and took it to Nintendo, I felt like a baseball player who slides into second base even though you know you're going to be out – but then it turns out you are safe."

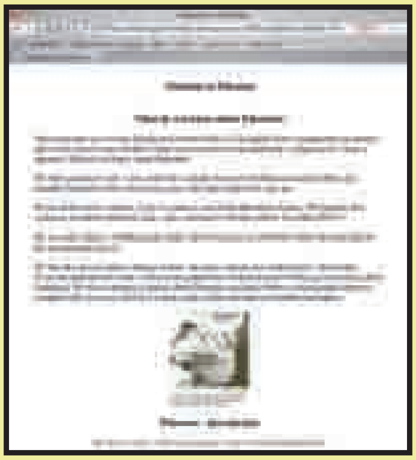
Though despite his doubts as well as the doubts of its own executives, Nintendo agreed to support Game Freak in the creation of *Pokémon*. The firm at no point, however, had

> **"I WANTED TO DESIGN A GAME THAT INVOLVED INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION"** SATOSHI TAJIRI





CAN'T PLEASE EVERYONE



AS SO VERY many things do, *Pokémon* attracted a lot of criticism from American puritan members of the Christian church, who claimed that it encouraged Satanism and occult behaviour in children. Among the most absurd objections was that the *Pokémon* slogan, 'Gotta catch 'em all', sung in the opening credits of the TV series, sounds a little bit like 'Oh Satan' when played backwards.

Christian communities also showed concern over the capture and control of Pokémon, thinking of them as parallel demons in the way that they needed 'magical talismans' (Gym Leader badges) in order to be controlled by humans. There's also the fact that Pokémon evolve, which contradicts Creationism.

It is, however, necessary to mention that Christian objectors were largely in the minority, and the Vatican itself even expressed its approval of *Pokémon* in 2000, stating that the games were "full of inventive imagination" and "celebrate ties of intense friendship".

Certain communities were not calmed, though, and the Cephas Ministry published a pamphlet advising against the 'evils' of *Pokémon*. This document stated that, "Any child exploring the most popular *Pokémon* websites will be linked to a selection of occult games such as *Sailor Moon*, *Star Wars*, and others more overtly evil". The Cephas Ministry has also advised parents that, "*Pokémon* conditions children to accept humanistic wisdom and occult spirituality", among other more worrying accusations and reports of children's spiritual epiphanies as they "burned their cards, warned their friends, and discovered the joy and freedom that only comes from following their Shepherd".

the game billed as the saviour of the Game Boy that it later became – Tajiri enjoyed taking as long as he needed with his team in order to finish the game and worked often with Shigeru Miyamoto, who Tajiri describes as "a mentor for my heart. […] I really look up to Miyamoto-san," he emphasises. "I think very highly of him. I'd memorise each piece of advice he gave." In fact, in the Japanese version of the game, Ash the hero is named after Satoshi, as he embodies the young Tajiri, and his rival is named Shigeru because he's always one step ahead. Tajiri's relationship with Miyamoto wasn't that of rivals, though – he was definitely a mentor, often offering advice during *Pokémon*'s development.

Tajiri finally completed *Pokémon Red* and *Pokémon Green* in 1996, and the game was released in the February of that year in Japan. Nobody had particularly high hopes for the game, and the success that was to come over the following ten years would far outstrip what anyone, especially Tajiri himself, had expected of the series.

THE BEGINNING OF A PHENOMENON

The result of the Game Freak team's six years of hard graft was *Pocket Monsters Red* and *Green*, collect-'em-up RPGs with the theme of communication at heart. Although almost identical, *Pocket Monsters Red* and *Green* featured slightly differing sets of pocket monsters, making it impossible for a lone player to collect them all – trading with and battling against friends via the Game Boy's link cable was absolutely necessary in order to collect all of the Pokémon and train up the perfect team. It was this theme of trade and communication, this then-unique usage of the link cable, which helped to make *Pokémon* such an addictive and universally popular videogame. By definition, it was an experience that had to be shared with friends; as a consequence, the *Pokémon* craze spread quickly, pushing software sales astronomically high.

Pokémon Red and *Green* sold 10.23 million copies in Japan and became the biggest-selling videogames ever in the region, beating *Super Mario Bros*' record by almost 4 million copies. Today, three of the top five biggest-ever selling games in Japan are *Pokémon* titles, with *Super Mario Bros* and *Tetris* making up the remainder of the quintet. *Pocket Monsters* took two years to make it to the Western world, by which time Japan was already enjoying several series of the *Pokémon* anime series, waves and waves of merchandise, a trading card game and three Pokémon Centre stores dedicated specifically to selling *Pokémon*-related products – all of which would soon reach the rest of the world as the brand's popularity continued to grow.

All of that, however, was superfluous to the excellent and engaging games that sparked the whole thing off; although later games in the series have refined and arguably improved the *Pokémon* formula, their impact was nowhere near as great as that of *Pokémon Red* and *Blue*. They are two of a very select group of videogames that could fairly have been said to have changed (or at least affected) the world – and it was that central theme of communication in Tajiri's mind from the very beginning that really drove their success. Where Tajiri had imagined a few friends sharing *Pokémon* over the link cable, though, much of the world ended up sharing the *Pokémon* experience.







» We don't know why everyone in Kanto was so very agressive; you couldn't even walk past someone without having to fight.

Pokémon Red and *Blue* told the coming-of-age story of a young boy from a small-time town, his dream to become a great Pokémon trainer, and the journey he had to take to achieve this lofty goal. Its message, essentially, was about the importance of aspiration and dedication; it took a lot of work to go from receiving your very first Pokémon from Professor Oak to building a team of six, strong enough to take on all comers.

Loosely structured around travelling the world defeating Gym Leaders and collecting the badges needed to take on the Elite Four at Indigo Plateau, *Pokémon Red* and *Blue* created a world that was startlingly believable on Game Boy's little monochrome screen; the game really captured the imagination, and the size and scope (as well as the sheer number of collectable Pokémon) was simply astounding for such a traditionally limited format.

The 151 varied and elusive *Pokémon* characters infused the game with life; the huge world of Kanto was packed with different wild species and their presence in every untamed bit of grass and uninhabited cave really helped the game world to come alive. Kanto's huge and varied ecosystem was believable and absorbing and *Pokémon* affected the lives of everyone on the continent, from your rival trainers to the old man whose Meowth looks after him, to the kids who carry Pokémon around as pets. It was a consistent fantasy world, suffused with imagination and opportunity.

Pokémon managed to involve players by making them work hard for their rewards, encouraging them to form strong bonds with the creatures whose growth and evolution they moulded. The satisfaction of victory upon winning a battle was enormous because you knew that your team of Pokémon was something that you had built yourself from the ground up. Every player experienced Pokémon in a different way, favouring different types and strategies; it was a particularly personal game, and because no two Pokémon were ever quite the same in terms of stats and moves, every team was unique, letting players experiment with unusual move and type combinations and forge a team that was entirely their own.

It's this personal aspect that made *Pokémon* so very addictive. One of the most inclusive RPGs ever made – perhaps going some way to explaining its universal popularity despite the stats and complexities of battle which could make it seem quite inaccessible – *Pokémon* was a game that everyone and anyone could play their own way. Satoshi Tajiri summed it up fairly well in the interview he gave back in 1999: "When you're a kid and get your first bike, you want to go somewhere you've never been before. That's like *Pokémon*. Everybody shares the same experience, but everybody wants to take it someplace else. And you can do that."

That battle system, too, was key to *Pokémon*'s enjoyability. Brilliantly complex and yet also intuitive, it was based around the relative strengths and weaknesses of the six Pokémon and move types, making for a bewildering array of different possibilities. Creating a well-balanced team was crucial and far from easily achieved; hunting for, nurturing and evolving your own super-squad potentially took hundreds of hours (looking back at our own *Pokémon Blue* game clock, it's standing at 130 hrs 56 mins). There was always something honourable about *Pokémon* combat; although



» The evil presence of Team Rocket pushed the player onwards.



» Pokémon designs evolved significantly in subsequent games.



» Although loosely based on real-world animals, their style was unique.



» Self-referential jokes were hidden cleverly throughout Red and Blue.

Red and *Blue*'s balance was slightly off (*Gold* and *Silver* went a long way toward rectifying this with the introduction of the new Dark type), winning was almost always a matter of superior tactics. Tajiri compared it to the ritualistic aspects of sumo: "The concept of [battling with] the communication cable is really Japanese: one-on-one. It's like karate – two players compete, they bow to each other. It's the Japanese concept of respect… It doesn't really get aggressive. It's an intricate style of communication. Almost subtle."

Pokémon was also unique in the way that it somehow managed to make the quite violent concept of pitting captured creatures against each other entirely non-aggressive. *Pokémon* never died, only fainted, and they could always be instantly revived at the nearest Pokémon Centre. Although the games later attracted criticism for the 'violence' of their concept, there was never anything bloodthirsty about the combat in *Pokémon*. It was a game of strategy, delicate balance and careful forethought, whose emphasis was on nurturing, competing and evolving, not upon destruction – another of the distinctive features that made it so appealing to such a wide variety of audiences.

It's actually quite difficult, all in all, to pick any holes in *Pokémon*'s concept. Despite the slight imbalance of Psychic Pokémon, and despite the increasingly repetitive practice of battling other trainers and levelling up your team, the game was so effortlessly endearing that it was all entirely excusable. When *Pokémon Stadium* came out in early 2000 (the year before in Japan), bringing with it the opportunity to battle monsters in glorious, technicolour and fully rendered 3D, it took *Pokémon Red* and *Blue* to an entirely new level all together.

Stadium allowed players to manage their creatures in a hugely sophisticated storage system and let them play the original Game Boy games (along with the subsequent semi-sequel, *Pokémon Yellow*) at five times the speed, which took the hassle out of training.

"IT'S THE JAPANESE CONCEPT OF RESPECT"

A year later, *Pokémon Gold* and *Silver* added breeding and an inspired night-and-day cycle to the *Pokémon* mix, but the innate appeal was still the same. At heart, every *Pokémon* game from *Gold* to *Emerald* is the same compulsive, endearing RPG as *Red* and *Blue*, although they have sadly seemed less and less inventive as the years have gone by.

The enormous number of Pokémon now in existence has also diluted the purity of the games in the opinion of many fans. Although *Gold* and *Silver*'s extra one hundred Pokémon had their justifiable merits, every addition beyond number 252 can't help but seem a little superfluous, motivated more by marketing opportunites than a desire to improve the game.

Pokémon Red and *Blue*, though, will always have a justified and revered place in the memories of gamers worldwide as one of the most universally loved, endearing and distinctive games ever made. There was no guarantee that such a risky concept would succeed, and not even the faintest inkling that it would do quite as well as it did in regions outside Japan.

Disappointingly, in today's modern industry, brands frequently take precedence over the actual games to which they are attached. *Pokémon*, however, stands out as a rare example of a brand that originated from a game in the first place, and one whose unbelievable success stems from invention, imagination and inclusiveness as opposed to the marketing budgets that so often define popularity today.



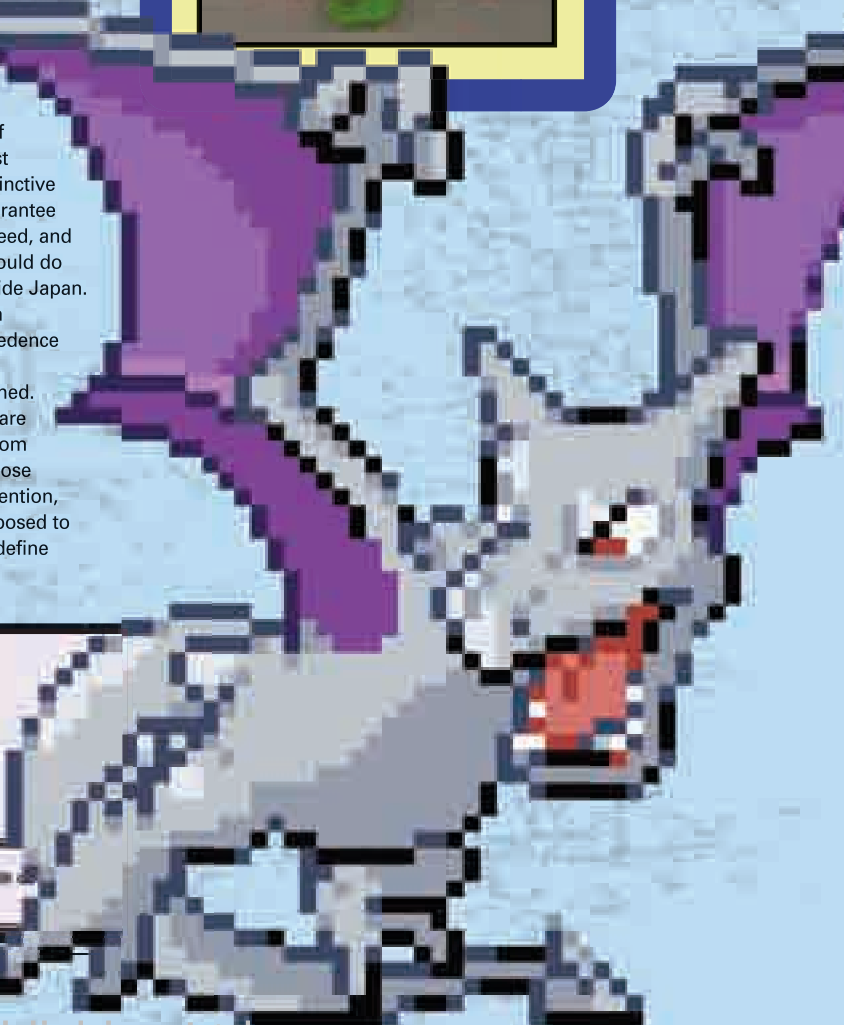
» Elemental Stone evolution – a moral dilemma in the TV series.



WHY POKÉMON?

POKÉMON IS, of course, a shortening of the Japanese name 'Pocket Monsters', but why was the name changed before *Pokémon* made it to the West? Aside from the negative connotations of the word 'monster' and the subsequent problems that certain minority American religious communities might have had with it (although that didn't stop some complaining – see Can't Please Everyone), there was actually already a Matchbox line of toys called Monster In My Pocket, making it impossible for Nintendo and Pokémon USA to trademark the name. Konami released a NES game based on the small rubbery toys in 1991, and there was even a little animated series.







SHINOBI III: RETURN OF THE NINJA MAS

BONUS! NINJA WHEEL!



- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5



HISTORY

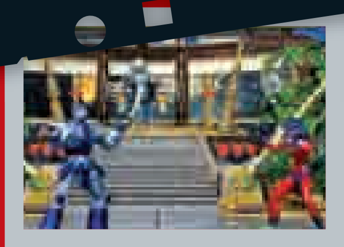
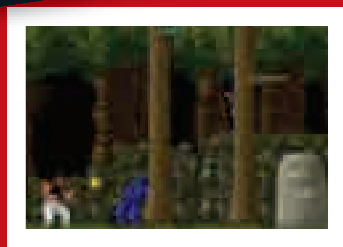
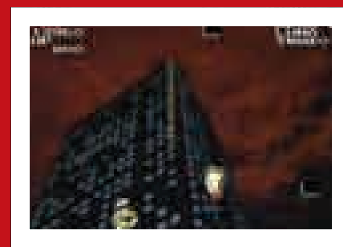
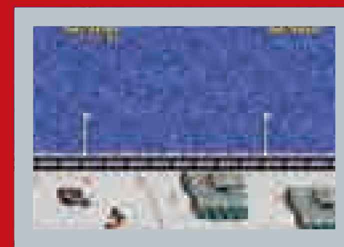
There was once this Bovril pot named Horace. He was due to be put on sale in various florists, but at the last moment was cuddled back and subjugated, then subjected to strange and drastic changes. He no longer contained Bovril but instead avarice, and his name became Doug. After this, children ran through the streets of Bogotá weeping – but they were weeping tears of utter joy and confoundment, because the changes were good. Very good, in the same way that a bonus ninja wheel is good. It's a strange story but one that eerily parallels *Shinobi III: Return Of The Ninja Master* on the Mega Drive, and therefore it has a point. *Shinobi III* underwent a major redesign before being released, with the first beta being vastly different to the final game. There are beta ROMs online to check.

To understand the sublimation of *Shinobi III*'s discourse, to the point where it is hailed and exalted as the finest pinnacle of the franchise, you need to understand one simple thing: it has a horse in it. *Shinobi III* also has a surf board, and a ninja; in fact, it has more than one ninja, several ninjas to be precise, and these ninjas, they ride on both the horse, and the surf board, though at separate times. The horse never rides on the surf board, though this horse does have four legs, which contrasts starkly with a surf board, which has none, and slightly less so against the ninjas which have two. It is possible to reach a zen-like stage of enlightenment, through much herbal tea and ornithology, to be able to quantify precisely how much of a subtle ethereal correlation the horse, surfboard and ninja have with each other. You will get to a point, where it almost, but never quite, becomes clear, that all three are in fact one and the same.

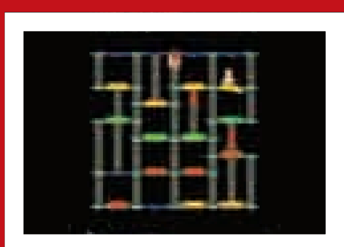
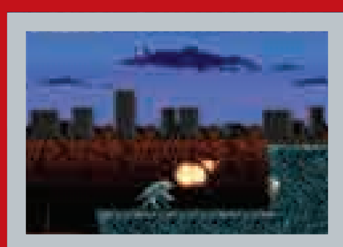
It was a game about awesome set-pieces, super-smooth action enacted via tight controls, clever level design, boisterously brash and exciting visuals, not to mention some truly stunning boss fights. Just look at this psycho to the right; any kid in 1993 looking at screens of this beastie was sure to want the game. Stupendous stuff.

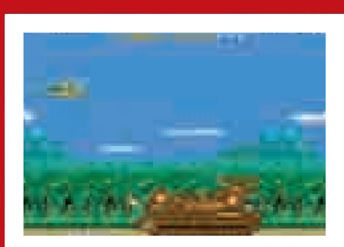
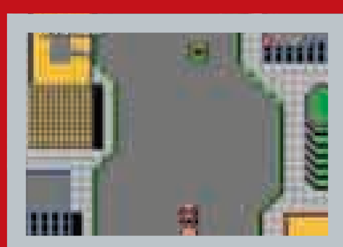


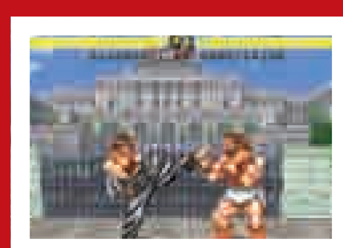
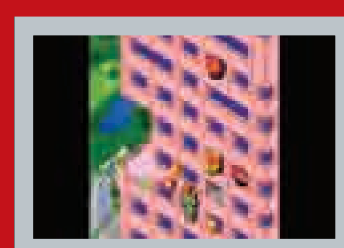
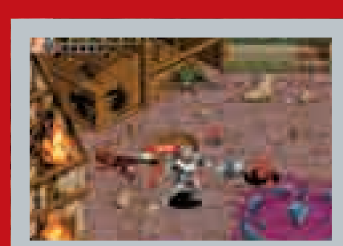
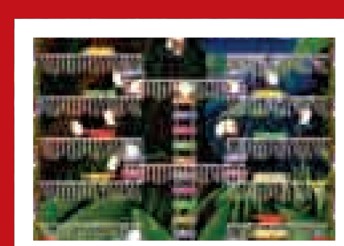

=37
=1
5493
STER

FROM DECO CASSETTES TO ROBOCOP: THE FULL HISTORY OF DATA EAST

WHEN WEST MEETS DATA EAST

Almost every videogame player knows the company or has played one of its 275-odd videogame or pinball machines. Although it has long since folded, its 27-year videogame history lives on. In Japan this company was called DECO, but others simply knew them by the name Data East.



» The main headquarters of the Data East Corporation, based in the Suginami-ku area of Tokyo, Japan.

What began as an electronic company started by engineer Tetsuo Fukuda would quickly turn into a videogame powerhouse. Data East Corporation began its operations on 20 April 1976, in Tokyo, Japan. In January of 1978, Data East's first videogame, *Super Break*, a simple ball and paddle game, was released to Japanese game centres. From 1977 to 1979 the company would go on to release a total of 18 coin-op videogames in Japan.

Data East's first office outside Japan opened in Palo Alto, California in 1979; its purpose was to purchase materials for export back to Data East Japan. It was in Japan that Fukuda's engineering sense started to pay off. He recognized how expensive it was for arcade operators to replace old game cabinets with new ones. To eliminate the expense and time-consuming move of an arcade cabinet, Data East Japan developed and released the DECO Cassette System. A revolution for its time, an arcade owner could simply keep a Data East cabinet and change out the DECO game cassette tape, eliminating the expense of having to replace an entire cabinet. Data East was promising a supply of over ten original videogames per year with its new hardware.

By 1980 Data East USA was in need of larger headquarters. The decision was made to move into a 25,000 square-foot facility in Santa Clara that would accommodate manufacturing, a service department, customer support and administration. By 1982 the new facility was expanded and in full operation. The DECO Cassette Systems would be produced using parts imported from Japan and then shipped to distributors nationwide. Heading up the new office was, Bob Lloyd, a former professional basketball player who had sales, marketing and management experience working with other Japanese companies.

In 1982 Data East would develop *Burgertime* and *Bump 'N' Jump*, in August and November respectively, to great fanfare. Bally Midway, already riding on the success of *Space Invaders* and *Pac-Man*, saw potential and signed on to exclusively distribute both games: a move that proved very successful. During 1982, both titles were getting more plays in North American arcades than *Ms Pac-Man*, *Galaga* and *Donkey Kong*, thus making them instant classics.

1982 also marked Data East's entry into the consumer videogame market with the release of *Burgertime*, *Bump 'N' Jump*, and *Lock 'N' Chase* on the Atari 2600 and Intellivision (amongst numerous other home videogame and computer platforms).

In 1983 over 35,000 DECO Cassette Systems had been sold in Japan and 75 game developers were on-staff at Data East Japan. A seven-story complex in Tokyo was opened to deal with the expanding staff – its fourth Data East office building. Due to its success, Data East was soon able to purchase and own its R&D and administrative headquarters, as well as a manufacturing plant located on the outskirts of Tokyo, which was already busy assembling DECO Cassette Systems.

Sadly, the DECO Cassette System would be phased out in 1984, as the company began to rely more on basic arcade boards. As innovative as the DECO Cassette System was, arcade operators began complaining that the magnetic cassette tapes were vulnerable to erasure and data corruption. The quality of games coming from Data East Japan was also being debated, as a variety of sub-par sports games and shooters would be released in the early Eighties for play on the system. However, any negative opinions on game quality would be quelled as things were rapidly changing as the decade moved forward. Between 1983 and 1985 Data East would develop and release a staggering 37 games. One of them would be *Karate Champ*, a game that would go down in history. It created waves since it was the first one-on-one, hand-to-hand fighting game, although it's important to note that Data East never originally developed *Karate Champ*; *Karate Champ*, in fact, came from none other than Technos Japan, a new start-up developer that would later go on to create famous side-scrolling fighting games such as *Renegade* and *Double Dragon*.

Meanwhile, Data East USA executives began to observe how well the NES was catching on in North America. The subsidiary had already licensed ports, for many of its arcade hits, to the Apple II, Atari 2600, ColecoVision, Commodore 64 and Intellivision. According to the book *Game Over* by David Sheff, Nintendo of America president Minoru Arakawa called Bob Lloyd at Data East USA to discuss the possibility of the company becoming a third-party licensee for the NES. Lloyd saw a problem when he



» *Burgertime* (left) and *Bump 'N' Jump* (right) arcade cabinets sit side-by-side – both games would be distributed by Bally-Midway.

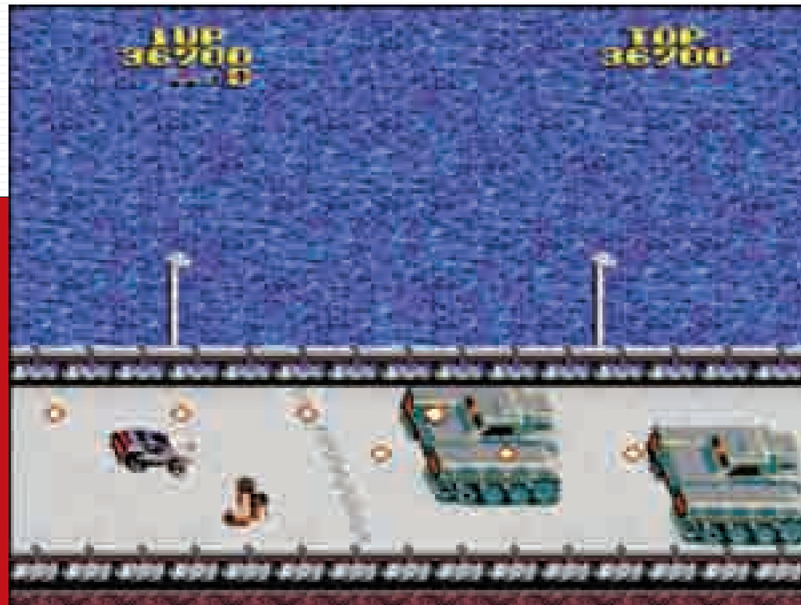
IN THE KNOW

First formed in April, 1976, Data East started off in Tokyo and released its first videogame, *Super Break*, two years later. Data East also famously created the DECO Cassette System, which pre-dated the arcade J.A.M.M.A. standard and sold over 35,000 units by 1983. Despite all this success, Data East found the move to 3D too difficult and closed in April 1998.



» *Bad Dudes Vs Dragon Ninja*: arguably, one of Data East's most popular coin-ops.

DATA EAST



» Released in 1986, *Break Thru* played like a side-scrolling version of Atari's *Road Blasters*.

LASER LIBRARY

1983 marked Data East's first laserdisc game release. The company developed *Bega's Battle* (aka *Genma Taisen*), based on the anime film produced by Kadokawa Films and featuring character designs by none other than Katsuhiro Otomo, who made his anime debut with the film before hitting it big with *Akira*. *Bega's Battle* consisted of a typical shooting videogame inserted over animated scenes from the film; these scenes played on a Sony laserdisc unit contained within the cabinet. Data East would release two more laserdisc games: *Cobra Command/Thunder Storm* in 1984, a helicopter shooter, and *Road Blaster/Road Avenger* in 1985, a driving game. These last two laserdisc games would once again feature anime film scenes with overlaying videogame play. Only a few working models of these laserdisc games are said to exist. As of this writing, the laserdisc footage of *Cobra Command* can be found on YouTube.



received a draft of the licensee contract from Nintendo of America.

Lloyd was satisfied with ordering a minimum of 10,000 NES cartridges for each game released. However, NES third-party licensees couldn't order lesser amounts in future cartridge reorders from Nintendo; this was a contract requirement that Lloyd disliked, but Nintendo wouldn't allow any exceptions. Lloyd signed on

IT WAS A NICE INCLUSION OF THEN US PRESIDENT RONALD REGAN, BUT IT WOULD BE REMOVED FROM THE NES PORT DUE TO NINTENDO'S RESTRICTION OF INVOLVING POLITICAL THEMES IN ITS GAMES

anyway, underestimating the success of Nintendo's first home console in the United States. NES titles that Data East USA published would later go on to sell 75,000 copies per game. "It was a license to steal," revealed Lloyd. Lloyd would later have to endure being teased by Arakawa every time he placed orders for cartridges from Nintendo of America, as later cartridge orders from Nintendo would average in the hundreds of thousands at a time for each game.

Beginning with its first NES release of *Tag Team Wrestling* in October 1986, Data East USA was bringing in $100 million dollars a year just on its NES game releases; that figure was ten times the subsidiary's prior total annual sales. Later bestselling NES releases would include *Breakthru*, *Burgertime*, *Cobra Command*, *Karate Champ*, *Karnov*, *Side Pocket*, and *Ring King*.

With a talented Data East Japan development staff spread across three different buildings in the Suginami-ku district of Tokyo, a development office was also opened northeast of Tokyo in Sendai, the capital city of Miyagi Prefecture and nicknamed the "Sendai Satellite". All development teams were going strong, and at the start of 1986 its games began to grow in popularity on both the coin-op arcade and home platforms, with each producer and designer bringing a unique style to each game they produced.

One of those producers was Makoto Kikuchi, who would design some of the most memorable Data East games. His 1988 side-scrolling fighter *Bad Dudes Vs. Dragon Ninja* would go on to become a classic. Its humorous storyline involved two tough guys beating up ninjas to rescue Ronnie, the US president. It was a nice inclusion of current US president Ronald Regan, but it would be removed from the NES port due to Nintendo's restriction of involving political themes in its games. Kikuchi would later go on to design *Sly Spy – Secret Agent* (1989), *Tumble Pop* (1991), *Diet Go Go* (1992) and the popular *Joe & Mac* game series.

Two other memorable Data East titles developed in the late Eighties



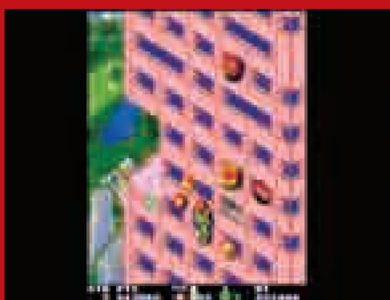
» *Avengers In Galactic Storm* was a 1996 2D fighting game (licensed from Marvel Comics) developed on Data East MLC hardware.



» *Bega's Battle/Genma Taisen* was one of three Data East laserdisc anime games.

"I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT I WAS IN OVER MY HEAD WITH PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT WITH NO OTHER TECHNICAL PEOPLE ON STAFF"

MICHAEL MEYERS



» Developed for Data East by Tokyo-based Woodplace, *Fire Trap* would also be released on the ZX Spectrum and Amstrad CPC.



» A fascinating glimpse into the warped mind of your average Japanese game designer.

were *Karnov* and *Side Pocket*. Karnov, a Russian muscleman, would become a mascot to Data East and appear in many other Data East games as an opponent. *Side Pocket* would become a staple billiards game and a constant earner that would generate sequels across countless platforms. At around the same time Data East began licensing popular motion picture properties such as *Ghostbusters* and *Robocop*, as well as the *Captain America* and *Avengers* properties from Marvel Comics. 1988's *Robocop* proved so popular that a sequel was produced three years later.

Data East also employed its own team of musicians to compose music for countless games – this team would be known as Gamadelic. Gamadelic began to form in 1985, accumulating up to seven total members and would go on to release 31 CD soundtracks in Japan between 1998 and 2002. They would go on to perform many live concerts in front of Japanese videogame music fans, the first being in 1991.

Cracks were beginning to show in the mid-Nineties as the industry became more competitive and companies like EA and Virgin began handling international distribution on their own without having to rely on other third parties. By the end of 1994, Data East USA had already released a combined total of 37 titles for the NES, Super NES, and Game Boy. It also supported the Mega Drive with nine titles, including many exclusives for the 16-bit system that included *Two Crude Dudes*, *Atomic Runner*, *Minnesota Fata: Pool Legend*, *Dashin' Desperados* and *High Seas Havoc*. Data East soon found itself unprepared for the onslaught of CD systems that would include the Sega Saturn and Sony PSone, both of which arrived on US store shelves in 1995.

"I'll be the first to admit I was in over my head with product development with no other technical people on staff," recalls Michael Meyers, who would arrive at Data East USA to handle double-duty as a director of product development and PR in January of 1995. Meyers was the former head of his own public relations firm, and Data East was a client until they made him an offer to come to join the company. With his arrival he found he'd already inherited projects that were in various states of production.

Data East USA soon found itself turning to third-party developers for PSone and Sega Saturn content. It released *Creature Shock: Special Edition*, originally developed by Argonaut Games for the PSone, only for it to receive dismal reviews – although the Millennium Interactive-developed *Defcon 5* would fare better with the gaming press.

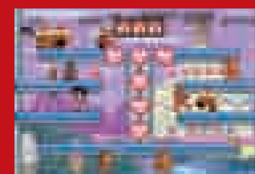
In short, Data East USA could no longer depend on Data East Japan for constant game content. In total, Meyers would make over four trips to Japan for meetings with Data East Japan executives. He realized that the company was not hiring any staff to develop for new platforms, nor was it updating itself with any new development technology.

"There were a lot of other companies that were thinking the old way would be good enough: Sunsoft, Taito, Jaleco and Data East," he continues. "Those companies were the ones that fell behind and did not survive the transition. I think that the development group at Data East was certainly a talented development group when it came to coin-op games and the old platforms like Super Nintendo. Sadly, though, they were just not ready to compete on this new platform where suddenly you're on CD."

Several attempts were made for Data East to enter the sports game genre. Since an NBA licence couldn't be obtained, early negotiations were

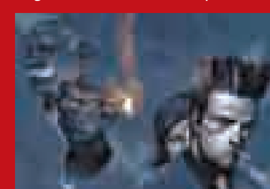
FINEST HOUR

Diet Go Go
(Japanese arcades 1992)
It's a damn shame that this insanely crazy platformer never appeared in the UK, as fans of *Bubble Bobble* and *Snow Bros* would have adored it.



JAPAN-O-FILE

Data East USA was also licensing other videogames from Japan and bringing them to arcades in the US. Toaplan, Tatsumi, and Mitchell would also develop several titles that they would either licence to (or develop exclusively for) Data East over the years. Data East Japan was always in search of new product, and they would strike a deal with First Star Software to bring *Boulder Dash* to Japanese arcades and the Nintendo Famicom in 1985 and 1990 respectively. Japanese gamers would also enjoy several Data East home console games. They were known as *Metal Max* (developed by Crea-Tech), *Hercules No Eikou*, and *Detective Saburou Jinguji* (below); each would go on to generate numerous sequels.



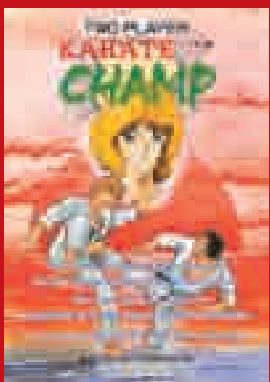


» The DECO Cassette System by Data East – almost 40 games coin-op games would be developed for this hardware.



» Stamp Expressions, the last product Data East USA would bring to market, would eventually fail in test markets.

DATA EAST



» This isn't the first time *Karate Champ* has appeared in a Retro Gamer feature…

put together to have Dennis Rodman appear in an arcade coin-op basketball game. Meyers hosted a team of developers who flew out from Data East Japan to watch an American basketball game. The programmers returned to Japan and used themselves to model for player movement. Meyers played an early prototype and found that the in-game players were too short and moved too quickly. In one trip to Japan, Meyers told the development staff that their basketball game was not going to work. The plans for a Dennis Rodman basketball coin-op arcade game were canned.

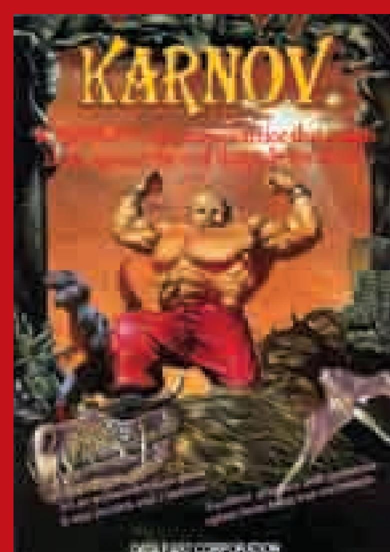
During one Japan trip, Meyers asked outright if other game designers from such companies as Konami and Capcom could be hired. In the US, luring an employee away from a company with the promise of a better salary was common, but in Japan this was unheard of and even considered unethical. Development costs were also another issue.

"I think that's what happens when new platforms come; you're used to a certain business model, and someone like Electronic Arts comes in and raises the stakes, and they sort of see the future and understand it's a lot bigger business now. They [EA] would throw $3 million dollars at a game, and a company like Data East was used to paying a couple of hundred thousand to do a game, certainly not more than a million," Meyers continues.

Data East USA then turned to Blue Sky Software with plans to develop PSone and Saturn versions of *MVP Baseball '97* and *MVP College Football '97*. After several delays, the opportune marketing time to release these titles was missed. Both *MVP* projects were scrapped and sold to Psygnosis for $750,000.

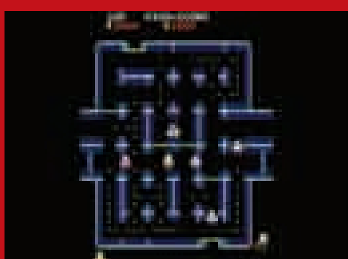
Less than two years after Michael Meyers joined the company, the order came down from Data East Japan in 1996: Data East USA would have to close its consumer software division. The small coin-op division would remain and Michael Meyers departed the company.

Keith Miyamoto, former accountant for Data East USA had a conversation that same year with staff members from an auditing firm that cautioned him about the future of the company. "I remember them telling me 'Keith, we went by Data East Japan and that place is dead, you should start looking for a job'. Already it was dying there, although we were



» *Karnov*. Not to be mistaking with a big fat circus freak.

GAMES REVIEWS

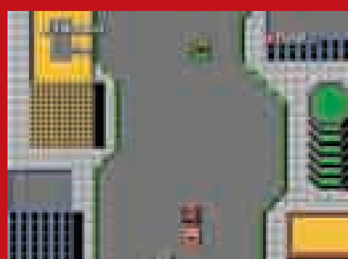


LOCK 'N' CHASE

(1981) DATA EAST

» You play Lupin, a silly little thief who must collect coins and grab the cash stash while avoiding the four guards (Stiffy, Smarty, Scaredy, and Silly). You can trap a guard, but must make your way out of the maze after grabbing all the cash and coins. The slow controls are bothersome. This DE arcade game was also ported to the Apple II, Atari 2600, and Intellivision by Mattel. Data East would bring it back to the Gameboy in 1990.

60%

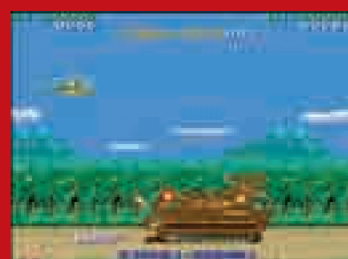


BUMP 'N' JUMP

(1988) DATA EAST/VIC TOKAI

» We opted to play the 1988 NES port over the 1982 coin-op version because of control improvements and the "continue cheat", which is needed to finish the game. The player has to avoid obstacles while shoving other cars off the road to gain more points. The NES version does require the player to pick up gas cans to continue racing, and there is more of a clear objective in finishing the game (rescuing your girl from the SuperCar maniac!).

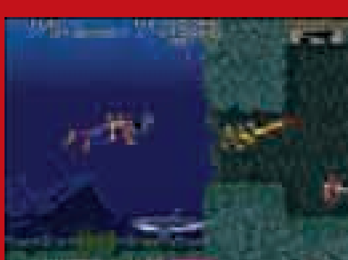
80%



COBRA COMMAND

(1988) DATA EAST

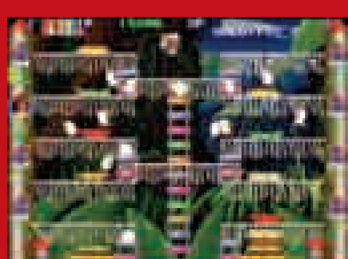
» A great helicopter shooter with plenty of bullet and missile fire power-ups at hand. Hunt down and destroy enemy missiles, shoot down planes and other helicopters while avoiding fire from tanks. There are 15 levels in the game and continuing the game allows the player to choose stages, as well as an array of guns, missiles and speed-ups. The NES port is worth tracking down for a try, though, unfortunately, the 1984 laserdisc anime version is currently missing-in-action. **85%**



SLY SPY – SECRET AGENT

(1989) DATA EAST

» Looking for a typical side-scrolling spy action game where your secret agent side can shoot down attacking dobermans and white tigers? Look no further than *Sly Spy – Secret Agent*, originally brought to arcades from *Bad Dudes Vs Dragon Ninja* creator Makoto Kikuchi. It's a fun game. but the lack of interchangeable weapons and repetitive levels drag the game down. Look for homage's to other Data East games such as *Bad Dudes*, *Chelnov*, and *Karnov* in the different stages. **70%**

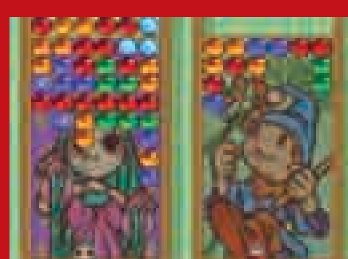


SUPER BURGERTIME

(1990) DATA EAST

» Eight years after the original *Burgertime*, this colourful update has multiple stages filled with a wide variety of new enemy ingredients that you must defeat with your choice of a spatula, pan or other weapons that are handed to you by a typical damsel in distress. The over-energetic music can be a bit annoying, but the expansive side-scrolling levels with our favourite *Burgertime* chef more than make up for it.

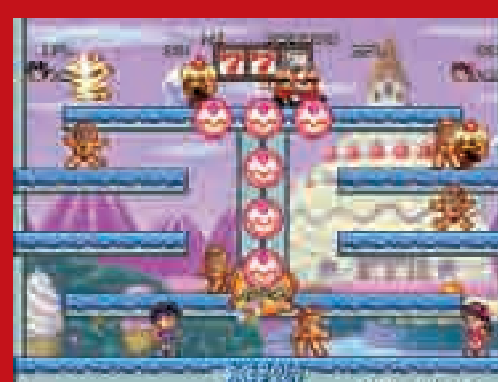
80%



MAGICAL DROP

(SUPER FAMICOM - JAPAN) (1995) DATA EAST

» Forget the objective of being given a colourful ball to stack one-at-a-time. This is about organization, taking down a colourful ball from above and throwing it back up again to make three-in-a-row. It's a very addictive anime puzzle game that takes a bit of getting used to. This was the mid-Nineties DE puzzle franchise rarely released outside Japan. The other ports for the Sega Saturn, PSone, Neo-Geo and GBC are worth tracking down if you can find them. **85%**



» Designed by Data East producer Makoto Kikuchi, *Diet Go Go* required players to throw food at their enemies.

giving it all we had… … As a business, they said it was empty, there is nothing going on, it's dead, there is no motivation, it just looks like a dying company."

Data East USA closed its consumer division in 1996 to focus on a variety of coin-op products over the next two years. It moved to a substantially smaller office in Sunnyvale, a complete departure from its days as a videogame maker, as their products were targeting young kids and teenagers. Its coin-op products included such games as *Rescue The Guppy* and *Wacky Alligator*. A photo-stamp product produced in association with Sega called *Stamp Expressions* was tested in different markets across the USA, but it failed to bring in substantial numbers to warrant a full launch. The final closing order came down: Data East USA would officially shut down in April of 1998. Prior to its closing, all remaining staff were given severance pay, and remaining office belongings were taken to a Japanese shipping and storage facility.

Unknown to many, it would later be revealed that just a year later Data East Corporation was actually $28 million dollars in debt. 1999 would also mark the final year that Data East released games to the consumer market in Japan. The company quietly attempted to re-organize its debt by selling various IT and electronic products over the next four years, but it wasn't enough. On 07 July 2003 a Tokyo district court officially declared Data East Corporation bankrupt.

G-mode, a Tokyo-based cell phone game content provider, would acquire a majority of over 100+ Data East games seven months later, while Paon Corporation, a Tokyo game developer ironically operated by ex Data East staffers, would retain a handful of titles such as *Karnov*. G-mode has already utilized their Data East games by licensing them to Turner Broadcasting for its GameTap service, and has produced a mobile version of *Burgertime* that is being distributed by Hudson in North America. According to, Yutaka Hashimoto, the head of G-mode overseas business development, the company is also in discussions to bring its Data East library to Xbox Live Arcade and the Nintendo Wii Virtual Console. Paon has been relatively quiet about its plans with the handful of Data East games it controls, but the company has announced it will be a content provider for the Nintendo Wii Virtual Console.

Gamadelic also continues to reunite and perform live for fans in Japan. In September of 2006 the group released a 2-disc CD set filled with Data East game music titled *Back In The Gamadelic!! Data East Arrange Album*. In January of 2006 Data East game music was also available on the platinum CD Box set, *Legend Of Game Music 2*. Both CD sets were released in Japan from Happinet Corporation via a special licensing arrangement with G-mode and Paon.

Although every single game could not be mentioned in this Company Profile, the future does indeed look bright, as G-mode and Paon will help to preserve part of the Data East legacy for years to come on new platforms and online services. With more than 100 games, no one will forget the company with the bold DE logo that delivered hours of fun to local arcades and home consoles.

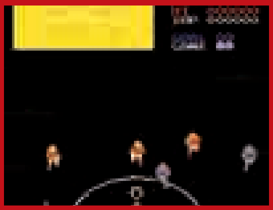
"I REMEMBER THEM TELLING ME 'KEITH, WE WENT BY DATA EAST JAPAN AND THAT PLACE IS DEAD, YOU SHOULD START LOOKING FOR A JOB'. ALREADY IT WAS DYING THERE, ALTHOUGH WE WERE GIVING IT ALL WE HAD" KEITH MIYAMOTO



» The controversial *Fighter's History* game – Capcom would unsuccessfully bring Data East to court claiming infringement upon its *Street Fighter* game.



» *Wizard Fire* (aka *Dark Seal 2*), was a medieval fighting/adventure game designed by Yoshiyuki Urushibara.



AVOID LIKE THE PLAGUE

Pro Soccer (Arcades, 1983)

There have been plenty of football titles available in the arcades over the years, and this sorry effort from Data East is easily one of the worst.

Dull visuals, uninspired gameplay and a ridiculously over-the-top difficulty level ensure that this will only appeal to the most ardent of footy followers. Stick to *Pro Evo*…

PINBALL WIZARD

In 1986 DE purchased Stern Pinball, and incorporated Data East Pinball in Chicago. The new division licensed a number of popular properties and produced pinball machines based on *Back To The Future*, *Batman*, *The Simpsons*, *Jurassic Park* and *Star Wars*. Data East Pinball had 25% of the international pinball market by the early 1990s. DE Pinball did attempt to create a coin-op fighting game, *Tattoo Assassins*, trying to cash-in on the success of *Mortal Kombat*. After a dismal public test, DE pulled the plug. Michael Meyers commented, "I'll give Data East Japan credit… we told them 'Look you're trying to do *Mortal Kombat*, but you're not really doing it. This game is not playable!'". In 1994 Data East sold off its pinball division to Sega for a reported $50 million. Gary Stern would buy back the pinball division from Sega in 1999, (known today as Stern Pinball).

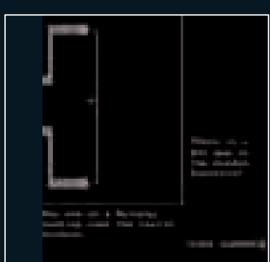


Arcade Flyers appear courtesy of the Arcade Flyer Archive: www.arcadeflyers.net. *Bega's Battle* screenshots courtesy of the Arcade History Database: www.arcade-history.com. Used with permission. The author would like to thank former Data East USA staff members Michael Meyers, Keith Miyamoto, and Sangita Verma for their help in providing information for this feature.

THE CLASSIC GAME

CASTLE ADVENTURE

Sometimes the simplest of things can be the most enjoyable. From the humblest of beginnings, Castle Adventure wowed computer owners during the early Eighties. Surely everyone with a PC during this era has played it? We endure the painful flashbacks of childhood to venture back into the castle.



» Another clever puzzle, you'll only discover the hidden gem by standing on the balcony and looking below.

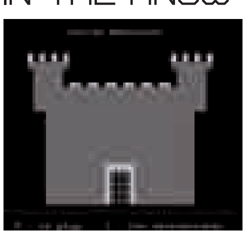
If you were a kid in the Eighties, then think back, think way back to your first weeks at school. Be honest with yourself and try to overcome the brain's in-built self-denial safety mechanism. You'll recall that you hated it. It was cold, oppressive, and so totally alien. Now, try to recall that first time in the school's computer room. If it had gone with rows and rows of DOS-based IBM PCs, then chances are these had *Castle Adventure*. It was created by Kevin Bales, who was apparently only 14 at the time, and it was later illegally used by software publisher Keypunch in its Swords and Sorcery compilation, titled *Golden Wombat*. We collectively recall our schools had the original, and from word of mouth many others too. It was probably so common because the game was free and, according to some, was one of the first examples of freeware. Since the school's mandate was simply to get children accustomed to these new fangled radiation boxes, during computer lessons we were allowed to use whatever programs were available. Suffice to say, once discovered, every child in the class made it their program of choice – the goal being to finish it before anyone else.

LOAD GAME A

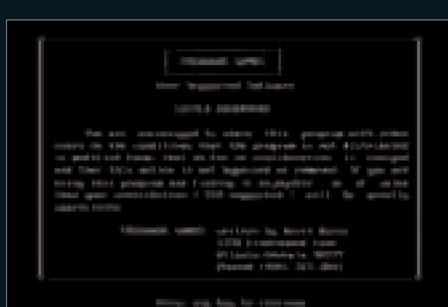
As can be seen from the screens, it's a game created entirely with standard ASCII characters. However, if you were a young boy playing computer games for the first time (girls in the class tended to not have much interest in the computers), those tiny characters took on a magical presence and became intertwined with the adventurous narrative in your mind. By not being numbed with the visual over-saturation of modern games, *Castle* was able to capture the imagination using symbolic representations of everything. An upside-down exclamation mark really did look like a wine flask with a tiny lid; the vampire, despite looking exactly like you (a club from a deck of cards), took on an imposing menace as he stood unmoving; you could almost see the magical sparkles on a hyphen symbol, which represented a wand; ogres and demons, represented by demented smiley faces, were incredible horrors

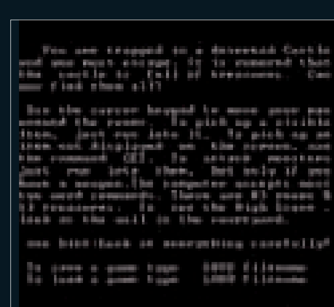
"It was a tough game and we have to admit to only completing it now, some 20-plus years later"

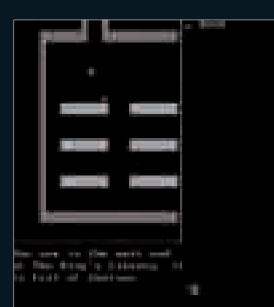
IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** N/A SHAREWARE
- » **DEVELOPER:** KEVIN BALES
- » **RELEASED:** 1994
- » **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** FREE!







» What secrets does this book hold? More importantly, the pages are blurry, so how do you read it?

> "Those tiny characters took on a magical presence and became intertwined with the adventurous narrative in your mind"

straight from hell's gates and creatures to be feared without question. Like most RPGs (and early games in general), its biggest strength was in the sense of discovery as each room was entered for the first time. Nervously you move up to the edge of one, to move into the next, but are always ready to snap back at a moment's notice should a speedy demon be lurking on the other side.

GET GEM

It was a tough game and we have to admit to only completing it now, some 20-plus years later – to celebrate, we've even provided you with the solution (see boxout). But back in the day, endless hours could be spent trying to work out how to solve certain puzzles or which items needed to be used where. There was a simple parser, allowing actions to be typed, like LOOK, WEAR, WAVE and SHOW. Plus there was an abundance of items to collect, but you could only carry a limited amount (thankfully you could DROP items if needed). This added a great deal of strategy, since the trick was to refrain from collecting all the treasures right away in order to make room for useful items – or alternatively to drop the treasures close to the exit for later.

LOOK FIGURINE

Despite the visual simplicity there was a surprising amount of depth to the game. The wine flask could be taken to the fountain and filled with water, to be later used in healing damage taken during fights with monsters. The battle system is admittedly fairly weak; you simply need to push into the enemy after collecting the sword, and winning is almost random. Thankfully collecting and wearing a helmet provides protection. Meanwhile, by standing next to the king's statue you can GET the NECKLACE (on the back is written: Protection from traps). Or collect and SHOW CROSS to the vampire to make him flee; for the fairies you need to collect and PLAY HARP, they'll then abandon the diamond they're guarding. There was also a special trick to collecting the CROWN – lure the demon to one side of the room. Exit yourself, then go upstairs, across the hall, and then down the other side, thereby trapping it against the throne. Any classmate who worked out a new trick was elevated to the status of demigod for the rest of the afternoon, and the hunt was on to be the next person to make a discovery.



» We spend many weeks trying to work out how to pass the vampire. HINT: Show him a holy cross to make him flee.

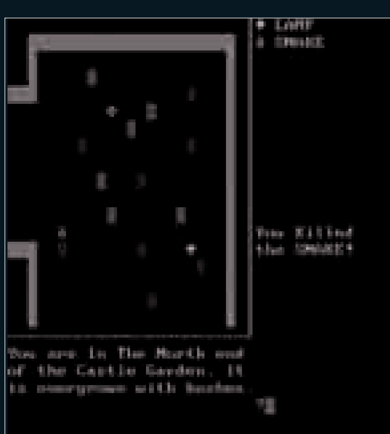
FILL FLASK

Today, its simplicity is likely to alienate many. This is made worse by the fact that it's difficult to use on modern computers; even when functioning, it runs far too fast. Thankfully with DOSBox (and the front-end utility D-Fend), it's possible to put the cycles down to around 300, which reverts it back to the original speed. It won't have the impact it would have had in 1986, but it has a quaint sense of design. There have been quite a few Windows-based updates and remakes, but none of them work as well as the DOS original (worse still, some even tried to add colour and proper sprites, which utterly destroys the atmosphere). Considering it's a free game and easily available, it's worth revisiting the castle.

THE GUIDE

We couldn't find any online guides, so here is ours to escape the castle... Go East and then North of the first staircase, grab the SWORD. Go East, push into the SNAKE to kill it, collect LAMP. Go upstairs. East is a HELMET, collect and WEAR it. Due south of the stairs is a statue, GET NECKLACE, then WEAR NECKLACE. West and North of here is the WAND and a demon. Avoid demon, collect WAND. Return to main staircase. Keep going North, ignore VAMPIRE, go upstairs. Then go South and upstairs. Go North, East, GET KEY. Return to HELMET room, go North and upstairs. Head South, then downstairs to dungeon. UNLOCK DOOR, head West until winding passage. Go South, WAVE WAND. Go South, DROP HELMET, collect SCEPTER. Return to main gate, WAVE SCEPTER and leave.





» To kill enemies you need to acquire the sword, and then simply push into them until they're dead.



» This statue once held the NECKLACE. Also, as you can see, you're able to DROP items whenever you feel like it.

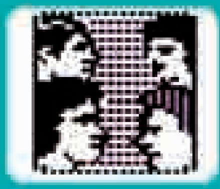


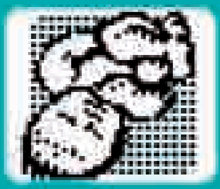
» Deep beneath the castle is the dungeon and a trap filled maze to navigate. Make sure you have the necklace!



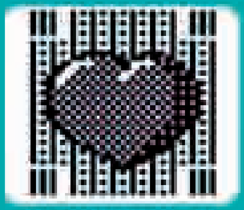
» This wand is essential to completing the game. Lure the demon to one doorway, then enter from another.

THE MAKING OF…



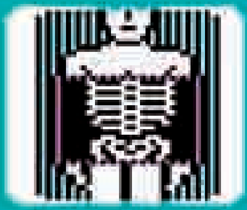


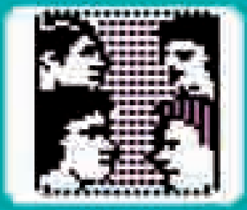
ALTER EGO

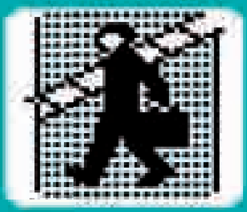


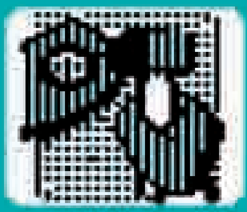


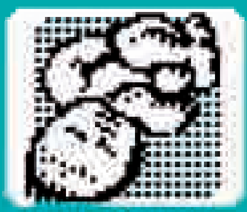


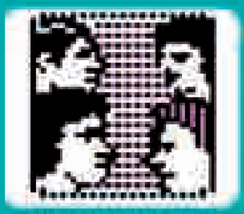


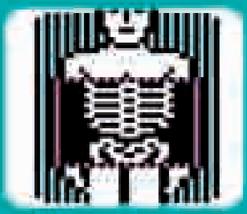






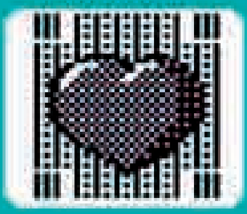






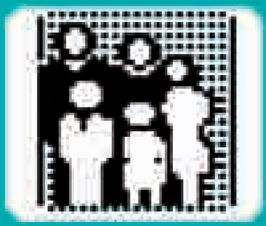




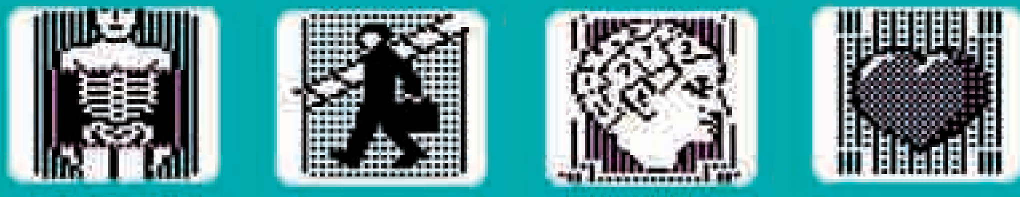


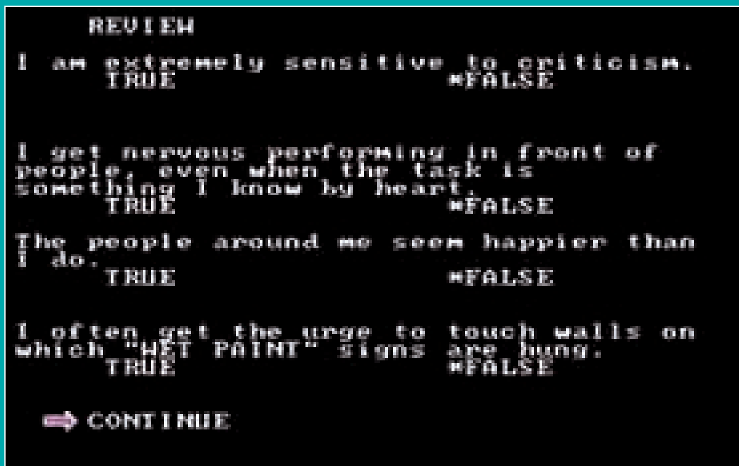
To live life over and over again – an ambitious theme for a contemporary videogame, let alone one released in 1986. Craig Grannell talks to Dr Peter Favaro about how he crafted Activision's innovative 'life simulator' Alter Ego.





On paper, a background in clinical and forensic psychology may not seem like the best credentials for someone wanting to stake their claim in videogaming history. However, the Eighties was an experimental time for the industry, and Dr Peter Favaro wasn't about to let any opportunity to make his mark slip by. "I've always enjoyed combining my psychological knowledge with innovative entrepreneurial projects," says Peter. "I became involved with Activision because I needed to pay my way through professional school and people were making a lot of money designing videogames – I thought 'why can't I?'" After hooking up with a New York-based agent and hammering out the game's proposal, Peter began working with Activision project manager James Charney. "The idea was ambitious, and with James's guidance, it came to fruition," recalls Peter, adding that Activation offered him total creative freedom and plenty of support, despite *Alter Ego* involving sexual and violent content. "Activision was brave to delve into a game of that sort. It was the





» The game starts with a questionnaire, the answers from which set up your alter ego's predispositions.



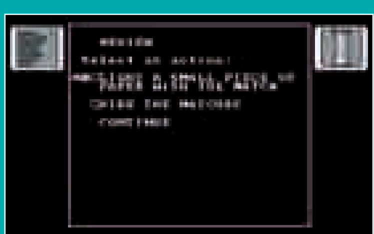
» *Alter Ego* starts at the beginning, including your alter ego's very first words.

first videogame to come with a parental advisory, but I was never told to remove anything," says Peter.

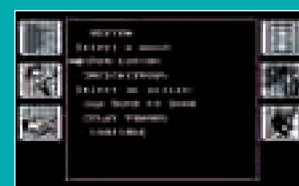
But controversial content was a drop in the ocean next to what Peter was trying to achieve. "The goal was to build a game where people could experiment with life choices and outcomes – I wanted people to explore their fantasies about life, while learning about how those choices could influence them," explains Peter. "Activision felt as though we were creating a new genre in adventure gaming – and we were!" There was nothing like *Alter Ego* at the time. Even today, the game remains unequalled in its field, with the closest approximation probably being *The Sims*. However, *Alter Ego* begins rather more simply than any of its 'competitors', with a 'true or false' questionnaire. "Think of those questions as setting up your predispositions," explains Peter, noting that the answers influence the first few years of your alter ego's life, after which your choices tend to direct the rest. The questions also have curious content, avoiding direct enquiries regarding emotions and characteristics (such as 'I am a happy person'), instead being rather complex and sneaky (for example: 'When I am in a quiet place, I get the urge to scream').

"This is an area where my expertise as a psychologist came in handy," says Peter. "In the training of psychologists, we encounter numerous personality tests, so question construction was familiar to me and I emulated the style of standardised tests." An option was also provided to have the computer choose answers at random, because Peter suspected some gamers would want to dive right in. "There were different styles to how people approached the game: many played as 'themselves', while others wanted a fantasy figure," he explains, suggesting those who wanted to play as 'themselves' typically answered the questions honestly, and those who let the computer choose were playing *Alter Ego* more as a 'game'.

Alter Ego 'proper' begins inside the womb, with you deciding whether your alter ego should 'stay in a little longer', 'come out fighting', or 'come out peacefully'. It then moves through seven phases of life, from infancy to old age. The icon-based interface enables you to access text-based life experience vignettes, and all the while the clock ticks away, forcing you to balance family and work commitments, entertainment and education. Despite actions being governed solely by multiple-choice answers, the game's complexity and potential for variation is huge, and the responses are diverse and frequently amusing. "For the scenarios, I used a mixture of my own crazy imagination and life experiences, along with interviews I performed on hundreds of people," explains Peter. "I spent a year walking around New York with a tape recorder, asking people if they could tell me about their most memorable moments. I got



» Children and matches are not the best combination, but it's down to your conscience what you do with them.



» As your alter ego ages, more life options become available, including 'risks', education and relationships.

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** ACTIVISION

» **DEVELOPER:** DR PETER FAVARO

» **RELEASED:** 1986

» **GENRE:** SIMULATION

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+



» Deaths in *Alter Ego* can be sudden and rather brutal – for example, getting into a stranger's car is a very bad idea.

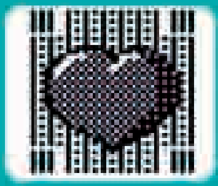


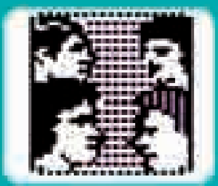
» The characteristics of your alter ego's chosen love determine how they respond to situations within the game.

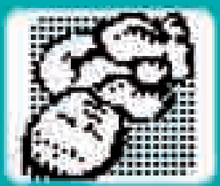
THE MAKING OF…

ALTER EGO





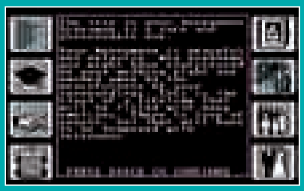








» Your alter ego's characteristics directly impact on opportunities – for example, untrustworthy souls will find work and relationships harder.



» Getting married impacts on your alter ego in numerous ways, and treat a husband or wife badly and they'll likely leave.

everything from bittersweet to bizarre, pro-social to illegal, and then some!"

When examining the game, it's interesting to note how it combines Peter's knowledge of psychology with his understanding of games. The phases within the game are, according to Peter, "standard from the standpoint of developmental psychology", and the central icons were also based on standard psychology, but this time from a humanistic perspective. However, an option to start at any phase of life was added for the "impatient, impulsive gamer who didn't want to get fed, burped or coddled – someone who wanted to jump to the edgier parts of the game". Of course, without experience from earlier life phases, the game becomes tougher, and you have less control over the outcome of the vignettes, and so it's most rewarding to play from beginning to end. And the endings were something else that surprised many at the time: the scenarios are often brutally realistic, and there's plenty of consequence – something uncommon in Eighties gaming. Endings can be abrupt: children who wander off with strangers can be murdered, and pensioners who over-exert themselves can drop dead at a sports match. "But such is life, eh?" jokes Peter, who was determined to "communicate to people the bittersweet nature of life – the fleeting, the real, the surreal. I had total creative freedom from Activision, and so all the parts of my philosophy and quirky sense of humour got added to the mix. I can be a serious person when I have to be, but I more often choose not to be, and so the game reflects the full palette of life experiences, through the eyes of a narrator who has a quirky, sarcastic and playful personality. This was one reason why it's possible to go through such horrible experiences and still kind of laugh off your own demise. I wish it were that easy in real life!"

> "THE GOAL WAS TO BUILD A GAME WHERE PEOPLE COULD EXPERIMENT WITH LIFE CHOICES AND OUTCOMES, I WANTED PEOPLE TO BE ABLE TO EXPLORE THEIR FANTASIES ABOUT LIFE, WHILE LEARNING ABOUT HOW THOSE CHOICES COULD INFLUENCE THEM" DR PETER FAVARO

TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

1 The status screen provides an overview of your alter ego's characteristics, age, job, marital status and possessions – the closest *Alter Ego* comes to offering a 'score'.

2 The education icon enables your alter ego to have school and college experiences.

3 The relationships icon provides the means for making dates and breaking hearts.

4 Increase your alter ego's social status via the major purchases icon – buy cars, boats and, erm, 128 KB computers.

5 Increase your alter ego's earnings via the vocational icon.

6 The social icon provides experiences involving interpersonal interaction.

7 Try to increase smarts and common-sense via the intellectual icon.

8 Self-care and health experiences are found behind the physical icon.

9 Scenarios affecting your alter ego's personality are found behind the emotional icon.

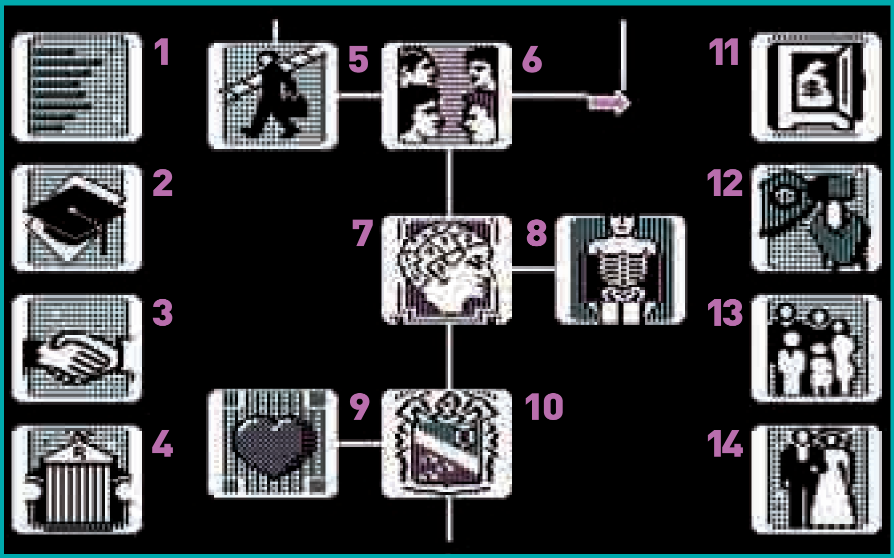
10 Experiences with family are accessed via the familial icon.

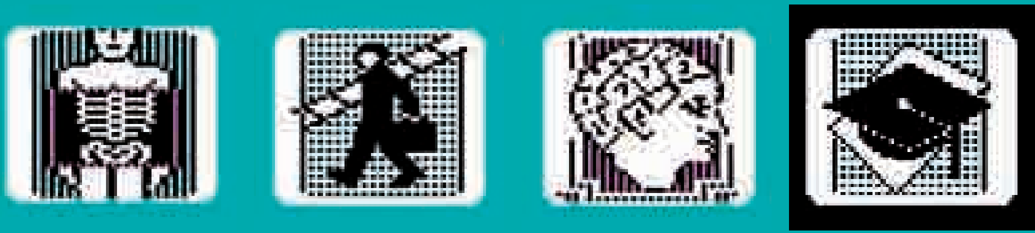
11 Use the loan icon to get extra cash to spend.

12 Apply for jobs using the work icon.

13 Have experiences with your alter ego's children via the family icon.

14 Get married (or divorced) using the marriage icon.





"I SPENT A YEAR WALKING AROUND NEW YORK WITH A TAPE RECORDER, ASKING PEOPLE IF THEY COULD TELL ME ABOUT THEIR MOST MEMORABLE MOMENTS. I GOT EVERYTHING FROM BITTERSWEET TO BIZARRE, PRO-SOCIAL TO ILLEGAL, AND THEN SOME!" DR PETER FAVARO

Some endings aren't so severe, but still provide impact. For example, careful players who reach old age may end up accessing every possible experience in the final phase, leaving only a solitary sunset icon on the screen, which, when clicked, causes the alter ego to die. Despite the barren, clinical interface, players often have plenty of emotional investment in their alter ego by this stage, and allowing it to pass on can be a sad experience. "The interface was designed to be austere – this was not a shoot-'em-up. The action went on in your head, and relied heavily on 'the projective hypothesis', borrowed from things like the standard 'ink blot test': the idea is that the less stimuli you have to influence your fantasy production, the more of yourself you will put into it," explains Peter, who adds that reviews suggested gamers reacted to this in powerful ways. "They didn't care about pretty pictures or lightning quick graphics. They wanted to know why, even if they lived a good life, they died of cancer or a heart attack, or got hit by a car, or why their spouse cheated on them, or why they could be more successful as a criminal than as a good person. In that respect, the game struck a powerful emotional chord with people, and, sadly, I don't think that has been duplicated in any game since."

When *Alter Ego* was finally released, critical acclaim was high – Peter recalls the game receiving a Consumer Electronics award and dozens of other accolades. Uniquely for the time, a female version was also released – something Peter says Activision supported: "I felt strongly about having two versions, because I wanted men and women to trade games and experiences. Anecdotally, this happened quite a bit, and the videogame industry was looking for a way to market to women, so this was an interesting experiment."

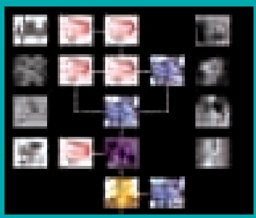
Perhaps the only negative aspect to the 'experiment' was that the game didn't entirely catch on. "*Alter Ego* was before its time, and came at a bad time in the industry," says Peter. "There was a move away from 'intellectual gaming' towards Nintendo-style arcade games, and this put me in a difficult position as a designer, because I wanted to build a platform for others to do similar things. As it always turns out, now there's a surge of interest in viewer-directed movie-type games, where the viewer directs the plot of the movie/game actions, identical to the type of choice-making that was first presented in *Alter Ego*." Peter reckons that if people today realised a game like his could be updated and redistributed, it would get a lot of attention: "I love *The Sims*, but *Alter Ego* was much more complex than EA's game, and I think a combination of the two concepts would be a smash hit".

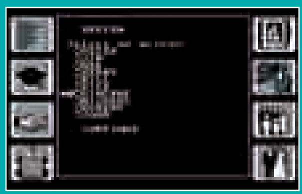
For Peter, the current state of the industry appears to be a double-edged sword, offering disappointing games, but with phenomenal multimedia aspects: "It's like watching action movies with great special effects and no storyline. And because it can cost millions to develop and market a game, companies take few risks." Peter bemoans the fact that companies pander to an installed user base and can continually sell to what appears to be an already saturated market. "To some extent, it's easier to produce a profitable videogame than a profitable motion picture, because spending tens or hundreds of millions on a motion picture has higher risks," claims Peter. "For example, early animated motion pictures – *Toy Story*, *Shrek* – made money hand-over-fist, but this isn't always the case now, because the market became saturated. People are less interested in seeing talking cars and animals – it's old hat! But gamers are diehards – less fickle. They'll buy into a franchise until their central nervous systems stop functioning, and as long as costs are controlled, franchises continue to make money."

The point, of course, is that Peter wonders what motivation game design companies now have to produce the kind of intellectual, humorous, psychologically complex type of game that *Alter Ego* was. "Not much," he suggests. "But here's the rub: if videogame companies start thinking outside the box, that is precisely what they will develop, if they want women and other ripe-for-the-picking segments of the market to join in. And what happens when motion pictures leave their one-dimensional ruts and become participation-based? The line between passive watching (movies) and active participation (gaming) blurs. And what do you get? You get psychologically-influenced choice-making, and like every worthwhile 'retrospective' look at anything, we are back to *Alter Ego*."

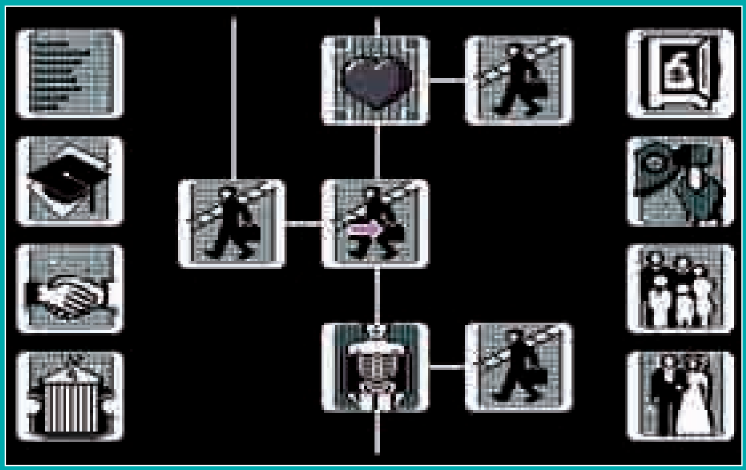
LIVING ONLINE

Perhaps because of *Alter Ego*'s simple interface, Peter reckons the game has been overlooked in terms of its place in the development of significant technology. "The game's text was fed through a set of routines that looped through the scenarios and looked for 'tags' that directed what the computer put out," he explains, noting that this is how all modern web languages work. "It was well before its time," he continues, and so we ask whether there's any chance the game might be reworked for current platforms. "I think the game would do well with a modern version, with souped-up graphics – perhaps a *Sims*-like interface," muses Peter. "I've even given some thought as to how I'd do this technically: it would be an online game, done using Flash, MySQL, PHP and XML." For now, though, fans who hanker for a bit of online *Alter Ego* should try: www.theblackforge.net.

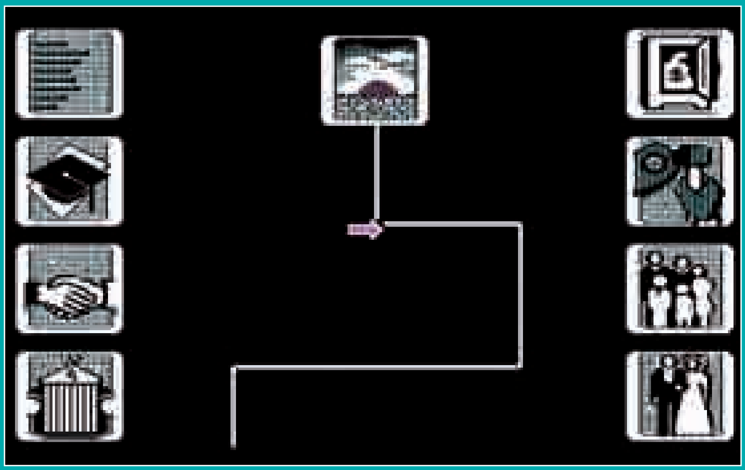




» Unfortunately for the modern-day celebrity, only traditional names are allowed when naming children in *Alter Ego*.



» As your alter ego enters adulthood, work becomes an over-riding factor in everyday life.



» Eventually, there are no experiences left, and so your alter ego is left with just one option: death.



METAL BLACK

SOUNDS LIKE A ROCK BAND



- **DEVELOPER:** TAITO
- **RELEASED:** 1991
- **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** 25p A GO

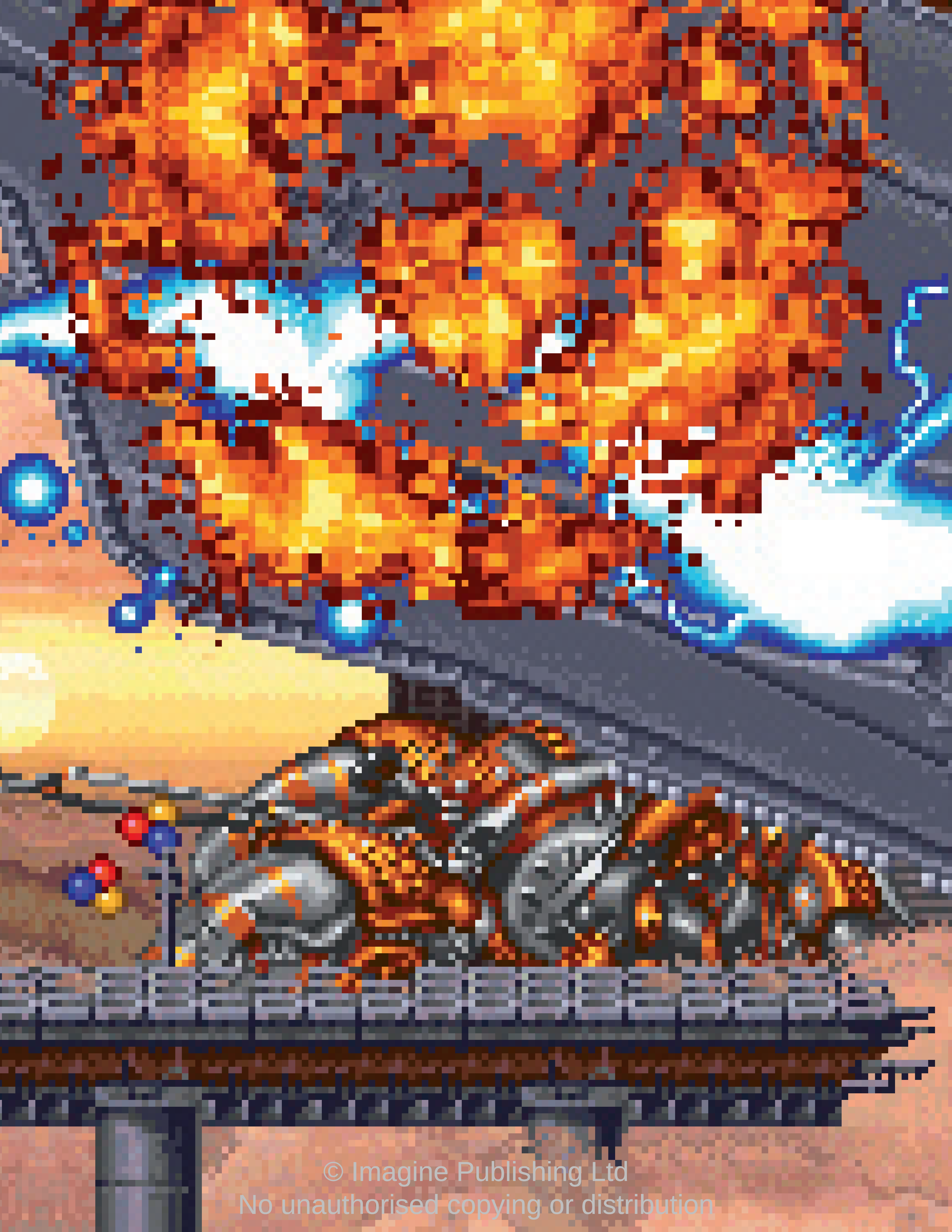
HISTORY



Let me tell you a funny thing about *Metal Black* and Taito, which I've kept a secret for about a year now. When *Taito Legends 2* was released across multiple formats I bought it mainly to play two games. The first was *Elevator Action Returns* and the other was the sublime *Metal Black*, a shmup I was rather fond of after my days in the Angolan border conflict – it has one of the most unique weapons systems around. I knew the Xbox had a tendency to anti-alias games when emulated, so the decision was made to go for the PS2 version. Oddly enough the PS2 version was developed by Taito, while the Xbox iteration was outsourced to, I believe, Empire Interactive. Surely the one by Taito would be the superior version?

Wrong! It turned out that Taito's version of the compilation had borked the controls and the weapon system of *Metal Black* – so the thing which made me buy the compilation, didn't work! Normally you'd be able to hit the super button and hold it down for a directed blast, then let it go for wild and electrical firing in all direction. It was a unique dual mechanic, especially since special orbs needed to be collected to use the secondary weapon. Unfortunately, the controls didn't register this, and, no matter what I tried, the emulator running it thought the button had only been tapped. I thought I would be forced to buy the original arcade board or expensive Saturn version just to enjoy it again properly.

Wrong! Because when I phoned Empire's customer support and complained bitterly, they apologised profusely, said they would pass the complaints on to Taito Japan, and, after a few minutes, agreed to send me the Xbox version which had working controls, for free! They didn't know who I was, and did it purely for professionalism and a duty to customers. Clearly, Empire's customer support team are wonderful people. The lesson to be learned here? Just stick with MAME, like we do. Oh, and have respect for customer support people, because they have a tough job dealing with irate members of the public.



HIGH SCORE

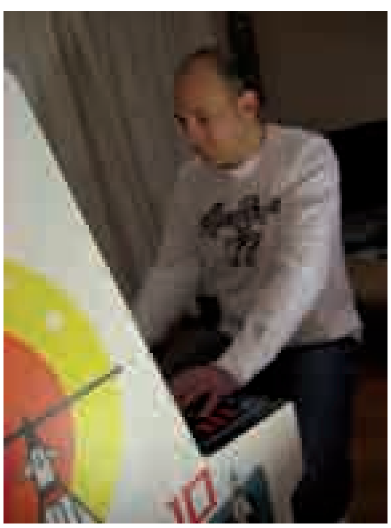
MISSILE COMMAND

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT, BUT FEEL FINE WITH SOME SURVIVAL TIPS FROM MISSILE COMMAND CHAMP TONY TEMPLE

Few games have captured the zeitgeist like *Missile Command*. On its release in 1980, the very real threat of nuclear war gave the task of defending cities from a relentless onslaught of missiles of mass destruction a terrifying poignancy.

Programmed by Dave Theurer – the genius behind *Tempest* and *I, Robot* – the game contains some perplexing bugs. Strange things happen on screen 255 (every point scored is worth 256 times its usual value) and 256 (no missiles or smart bombs appear at all) and screen 257 reverts to the speed and difficulty of level one. Most famously, each time you score 810,000 points, you are awarded 176 bonus cities. It's a mixed blessing, as with such a reserve, expert players can effectively play indefinitely – the current record for a 'marathon' game stands at over 80 million, at least for now (see boxout).

The enduring appeal of *Missile Command* has seen it appear on numerous home consoles, stretching from a valiant effort by Rob Fulop for the Atari VCS right through to its proposed reappearance on Xbox Live next year (complete with a dreaded '3D' update). It even has the dubious honour of receiving the pop song treatment – sing along at http://blogfiles.wfmu.org/CM/Atari_Missile_Command.mp3.



» 'I'm just hoovering, love'. Tony's idea of housework.

THE EXPERT

It began in 1984 at Rita's Café, a greasy spoon joint in Bristol with a menu of artery clogging full English breakfasts and classic arcade machines that smelled of bacon. It ended 22 years later with a new *Missile Command* high score and a place in *The Guinness Book Of Records*. In the intervening decades, Tony Temple would brave demented Greek proprietors, have his dreams shattered by programming bugs and disappearing cabinets, enlist an ace arcade restorer, travel half the world to prove his gaming prowess and pick up a psychotic stalker on the way. I think this is what they call 'a journey'.

"I remember walking past Rita's on a Saturday and peering through the steamed up windows and seeing flashing neon and faint electronic noises," recalls Tony. "I was drawn to it. *Missile Command* became an obsession. I'd lie in bed and see missiles coming down the inside of my eyelids."

The boy had found his nemesis and his youthful fingers caressed that trackball for months, gunning for the magic million. Then, disaster. At 810K, the infamous 'bug' struck, the game went haywire and believing Tony's skills had caused the machine to have a nervous breakdown, café owner Pete the Greek pulled the plug. The sadly predictable chip pan fire that gutted Rita's the following year wasn't really what quelled Tony's obsession though. It was that coding oversight, which rendered the game a test of endurance rather than skill – he could play all day for 10p, but where was the challenge?

Two events in 2004 rekindled the passion. First, Archer Maclean transformed a battered *MC* cabinet into a pristine machine, which could sit proudly in Tony's Derbyshire home. Second, Tony discovered the Twin Galaxies 'tournament' setting, which ramps up the difficulty to extreme levels by not awarding any bonus cities – thus conveniently sidestepping the 810K bug. Now all that was required was a bit of unhealthy competition.

"I started getting emails from a Roy Shildt. He was the man who had held the record for 22 years and he was on a mission to throw me off course. His emails would range from denouncing Twin Galaxies – or 'Twin Fallacies' as he referred to them – and all who sail in her, to questioning my abilities at the game and making all sorts of weird and wonderful challenges. At one stage, he wanted to wager $10,000, fly to the UK, and play me in front of referees from *The Guinness Book Of Records*, even though they'd been ignoring his emails for the best part of five years. Make no mistake, this score was the most important thing in Shildt's life. After fruitlessly trying to reason with him, I realised the only way to shut this guy up was to trounce his score."

And that's exactly what he did. In the early hours of 9 March 2006, Tony posted a score of 1,967,830 – an achievement described by TG chief referee Walter Day, not known for his understatement, as "like storming the beaches of Normandy and snatching victory from the jaws of defeat."

That's not quite the end of the story. Tony aims to crack the 2 million barrier on a game that continues to beguile him. "The record has been incidental. It's always me against the machine. It's become something I have to do, like brushing my teeth. I can be playing on autopilot through the early stages but I still get that adrenaline rush when I get over a million. It's the only game that I enjoy every time I play – and I learn a nuance more each time."

THE KNOWLEDGE

The first rule is to STAY CALM. *Missile Command* seems to bring out an extraordinary panic in players. Don't forget kids, if you panic, you die. A good tactic if you are starting out is to create a blanket of missile explosions half way across the screen at the start of the wave. This buys you time to deal with specific problems. The downside of this is the waste of missiles. When you get

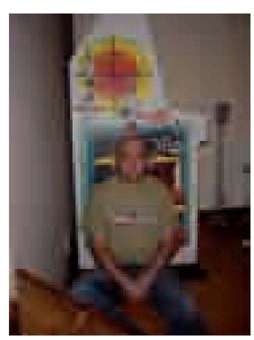
HIGH SCORE NEWS

The annual November Jamboree held at Funspot arcade in New Hampshire, USA, saw more world records tumble. Martin Bedard upped the *1942* top score to over 13.3m and the irrepressible Donald Hayes increased his *Super Cobra* record to 248,100. Tony Temple also made the trip over the pond and his best effort of 1.7m was just 8 gaming minutes short of that elusive double rollover…

We at RG don't just report the news – we get in there and make it. So when we bumped into James Clewitt, former world record holder on arcade *Tetris*, at the *High Score* film premier in Nottingham, we promised him fame and fortune (ie, a piece in Retro Gamer) if he reclaimed his title. Inspired (or possibly intimidated), James is back in practice. Watch this space for news of his block rocking feats…



» The original title for *MC* was *Armageddon*. Heavy.



» See www.wayoftherodent.com for more from Tony and lovely T-shirts like this.





» The in-game cities were to be named after locations on the Californian coast, until someone decided that might be tempting fate…



» What do you mean, you haven't got one yet?





» Save the world with three buttons and a shiny ball.



» Soon available from IKEA…

"MISSILE COMMAND BECAME AN OBSESSION. I'D LIE IN BED AND SEE MISSILES COMING DOWN THE INSIDE OF MY EYELIDS" TONY TEMPLE

more confident, you should look to drop this method and go with individual shots. If you are playing on marathon mode where you get a bonus city every 10,000 points, remember you don't have to be a hero, as another city will be yours if you score the required points. Don't think twice about sacrificing those suckers in the cities if you need to gun for your next 10,000. Tournament mode is another matter. If you lose all your cities, it's game over. Try to use the missiles from your two end bases first. You'll notice that these missiles fire slower than those from the centre base. You should try to save your centre base missiles until the end of the waves – you will find it easier to nail the smart bombs with these speedier shots. Following this logic, if you are losing cities, try to keep the middle left or right city at all costs as it's much easier to protect.In any one wave, you cannot lose more than three cities. Watch closely and you'll be able to work out which cities are being targeted. Look for opportunities to conserve your missiles whenever you can. Ignore enemy missiles heading for cities already destroyed and try to use one shot to take out two or more attacking objects. Most games end because players run out of missiles – cut out the wasted shots and you'll do better. Planes and satellites – sneaky buggers these. Leave them on screen for too long and they'll take pot shots at your cities. Sort them out as soon as they appear to remove the danger. Smart bombs have an uncanny knack of avoiding your explosions. You'll find if you leave them to drop down low, they are much easier to take out, as your defensive missiles have less distance to travel.The trackball is your friend. Learn to love it, and get to know its sensitivity. Over time, you'll be able to shoot things on each side of the screen without looking. Trust your instincts – 'fire and forget' is the key to high scores.

ONE QUARTER – TWO DAYS – NO PAUSE BUTTON

American Bill Carlton has set his crosshair on overhauling the *Missile Command* marathon record held by Victor Ali since 1982, a task that entails playing a single game for over 48 hours without a break. His extraordinary efforts are chronicled in High Score, which premiered in the UK late last year. Whilst the film has plenty of gung-ho gaming – Bill screaming, 'I'm kicking this game's ass!' into the camera had the audience whooping in approval – the director Jeremy Mack has managed to tell a profoundly human story of hopes, dreams, disappointments and roller-skating. Visit www.highscoremovie.com to be entertained and inspired.



» With 46 hours still to go, Bill wishes he'd gone to the toilet first.

遠くの稀で、エキゾチックなゲームを愛する人々のため

FULL OF EASTERN

ON THE VERGE OF MANKIND'S GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT, ONE MAN LOSES EVERYTHING

POLICENAUTS

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI

» **DEVELOPER:** HIDEO KOJIMA

» **FEATURED HARDWARE:** PC98, SATURN

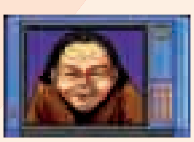
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £40 DEPENDING ON VERSION

» **ALSO AVAILABLE FOR:** FOR: 3DO, PSONE

» **CAN'T IMPORT?** SNATCHER (MEGA CD)

Although the mechanics are simpler than *Policenuats* (menu selections as opposed to mouse point-and-clicking), and the stories aren't directly connected, both are by Hideo Kojima and both have the same gritty cyberpunk noir styling, not to mention both have complicated and utterly engrossing narratives. Plus, you'll understand *Snatcher* since it's in English. Although rare and expensive, it was release in the UK for the Sega Mega CD, and is as close as you'll get to *Policenauts*, without actually playing it.





Interesting fact
There are numerous references to other Kojima games, like a cameo appearance by Napoleon from *Snatcher*. To find him, keep an eye out for a short man sitting down at an airport terminal – he'll mistake you for Gillian Seed.

Everyone knows of Hideo Kojima, the creator of both Snatcher and the Metal Gear franchise. But how many know about Policenauts? And for those that do, which have played it, as opposed to only hearing snippets of lost conversation? As one of the most fantastic Japan-exclusive games ever released, Poychi Robo is happy to dye his hair blue, light a cigarette, and commence the Policenauts investigation.



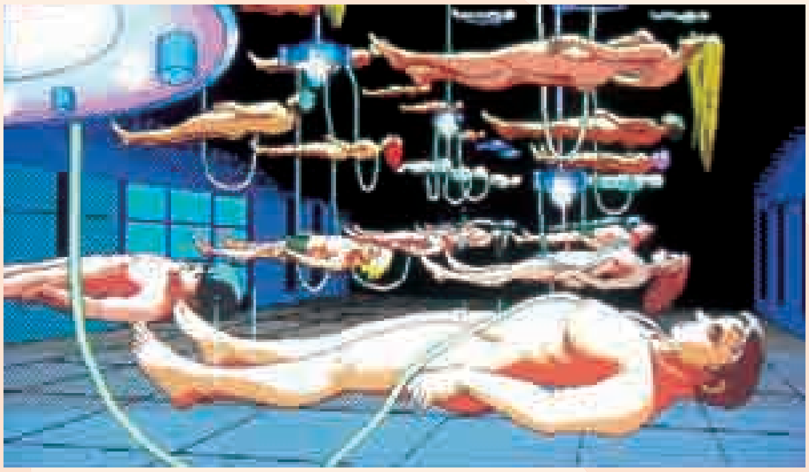
» The lightgun sections are fast and action-packed, with one later occurring in a speeding vehicle. (Saturn)

メガ駆動機構

Before *Metal Gear Solid*, Hideo Kojima created *Policenauts*, a point-and-click adventure first released in 1994. It's reputed to have taken him over five years to create and for some, is regarded as his magnum opus. From the very start it's a game which intrigues and pulls you in, even if you can't speak a word of Japanese. After an animé cartoon intro it begins with an almost Vangelis-style saxophone and guitar composition, followed by classical Konami chanting, while panning over Old LA as our protagonist, Jonathan Ingram, speaks of his past. It's impossibly cool and evokes the same feeling of awe that *Snatcher* did before it. This could indeed be Kojima's finest work, with a greater storyline and a more perfect realisation of its world's inner logic than even *Metal Gear Solid*; adventure games do not come much better than *Policenauts*. As such, it is a travesty of epic proportions that Konami was too narrow-minded, too blinkered, too incompetent, to release it in English in the West.

This shamefully means the only way to experience it is by getting the Japanese original and printing off both a guide and translation notes from the internet. It's a feeling which harks back to the glory days of trying to complete Super Famicom RPGs when they weren't being released outside of Japan and, while you'll never be able to fully appreciate it, there's an undeniable sense of excitement and achievement as you manage to glimpse fractions of *Policenauts*' epic magnificence – it is arguably one of the greatest games never to leave Japan. Let us convince you why.

In the year 2010 the world's first space colony, Beyond Coast, is completed. Three years later a special squad of five policenauts (a portmanteau of police and astronaut) are assigned to maintain security. Jonathan Ingram was one of the first policenauts, but during a freak space-walking accident he drifts off into space and is presumed dead, but is discovered cryogenically frozen and alive 25 years later. He hasn't aged a day, while his wife has remarried, and his friends have moved on. With his life destroyed, and a newly-acquired spacephobia, Jonathan returns to Earth to work as a private investigator in the city of Old LA. He's a man on the edge with nothing left, a habitual chain smoker and borderline alcoholic; the only thing that keeps him going day-to-day is dealing with the scum left behind on Earth. One day his estranged wife stops by, and asks him to take on a case: to return to Beyond Coast and investigate her new husband's mysterious disappearance. Jonathan refuses and she leaves,



» The bodies are suspended by wires, some attached directly to the bones. What kind of hellish experiments are these? (PC98)



» This bikini-girl filled place is the "Zero-G Garden" on Beyond Coast, where rich people like to go to "unwind" and "relax." (Saturn)



» The freaky man on the left is Tony Redwood, a frozener; these are synthetically created people who are immune to the effects of outer space. (PC98)

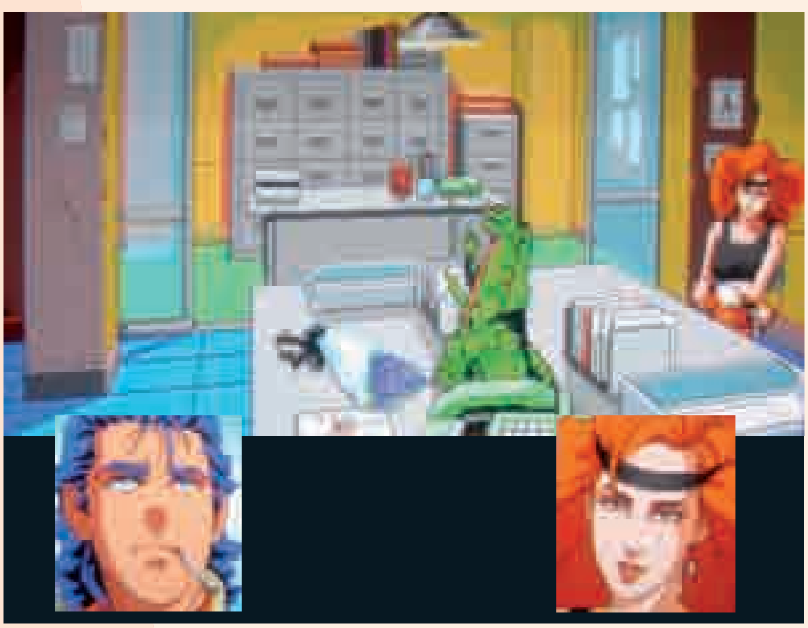
but looking through his window he sees footprints by his wife's car, and moments later it explodes, killing her. This leads to an intense shoot-out with a masked bomber who leaves a trail of white blood. Afterwards Jonathan decides to visit the space colony, meet up with his old policenaut buddy Ed Brown, and work out what the hell is going on. This is the start of a case that will unravel a terrifying conspiracy aboard Beyond Coast, with the kind of complicated plot twists and shocking revelations that Kojima is famous for. Though, it has to be said, they're a lot more restrained than his later work.

The gameplay takes a form everyone will recognise: move a mouse pointer and click on hotspots to interactive with them, either by looking, examining, activating or, in the case of people, talking.

As you can see from the screens it's a cinematic experience and Kojima, as always, has referenced many of his favourite films – *Lethal Weapon* (the main characters resemble Riggs and Murtaugh), *Blade Runner, 2001 Space Odyssey, Bad Blood, New Rose Hotel, Bullitt, Frenzy, Die Hard,* and the list goes on.

Greatly enhancing things, and elevating this above the realm of standard adventures, are several lightgun shooting sections and a nail-biting bomb-diffusal puzzle. The lightgun sections are excellent and gives proceedings a greatly appreciated tactile element. Meanwhile, depending on which version you're playing (such as the Saturn), there's also an insanely comprehensive world encyclopedia available. This covers every single facet of the future world you find yourself in, from varieties of news agency, laws, medical advancements, global changes, pop culture, and countless other details; hell, it evens lists the varieties of pornography people in the year 2040 are using. We weren't able to count every encyclopedia entry, but there are well over 200, many being more than a page long. It highlights how detailed Kojima's vision is.

Four main versions were released consecutively, on the NEC PC98, 3DO, PSone, and finally Saturn. The PC98 iteration is desirable because it contains extra dialogue and plot descriptions, but the three-disc Saturn version is the definitive one to play through since it has lightgun support and several features not in the others. Unfortunately, while members of JunkerHQ.net still slave away on a fan-translation, there has still not been any English-language patches released for any of the versions. With UMDs able to hold up to 1.8 gigs of data, we demand that Konami sobers up and gets to work on an official English PSP port. The gaijin world NEEDS to experience this game. NOW.



» Meryl Silverburgh really filled herself out and became quite the woman since her FOX HOUND role in *Metal Gear Solid.* (PC98)

Special thanks to members of JunkerHQ.net for assisting with images

私を読み、私に書くことができ、私に知らせれば好みのゲームはある

THE CLASSIC GAME

STREET FIGHTER II

THE WORLD WARRIOR

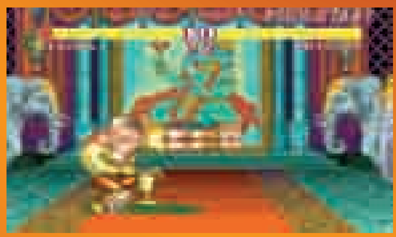




What can be said about Street Fighter II that hasn't already been said? It reignited the arcades, enchanted thousands, and exemplified an era. It became a part of modern pop-culture and, by defining a genre, one of the most important games ever.

Have you ever tried to play *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior* in the arcades, while eating a profiterole? There's only a limited number of options available. The profiterole can be held in the left hand until consumed, leaving the right to jab at the six attack buttons and keep your opponent at bay, at least until the dessert is finished. Alternatively the sugary treat can be held in the right hand, stopping you from performing attacks, but allowing joystick movement and therefore the avoidance of any attacks. True *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior* masters though will place the profiterole between their teeth, growling ominously as their visual range is partially blocked, and then proceed to jellify the other person's teeth with intense Hadokens. Unfortunately, at the exciting climax of the battle the resulting tensing of jaws is likely to result in profiterole cream shooting out all over the monitor. Basically, what we here at Retro Gamer are trying to say, is that with *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior* you can't multitask: it's a classic game that demands your utmost attention and full concentration. Eating profiteroles, smoking cigarettes, or drinking ale, are all things which should be avoided as they only distract you from what is a pure pastiche of real kerbside brawling.

But which character should benefit from your attention? Dhalsim – surely he was everyone's first choice on the new *Street Fighter II: The World*



» Dhalsim flies in to give Blanka a peck on the cheek, but the green-skinned Brazilian is shocked by his platonic affection.

"FURTHER TRAINING WOULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO THE FOUR MAIN BOSSES: BALROG, VEGA, SAGAT, AND M-BISON"





» This screen alone recalls a thousand memories, of a thousand tense fights against a thousand rival players.

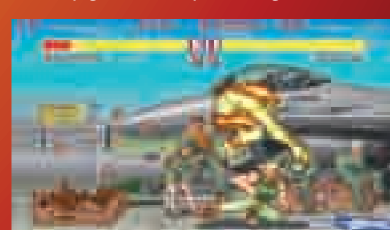
Warrior cab in their local arcade? This would likely be the result of his long arms. When seeing others pulling off complex moves, plus short combos, via some kind of controller voodoo, which seemed impossible to fathom, Dhalsim's long arms, which required only a single button press, must have seemed like the perfect way of getting a decent attack distance. Of course, against anyone other than a newcomer, this tactic would be useless. Projectiles could still reach, while a good player would perform a flying kick followed by a cross-over, throw, or something else. And so began, no doubt for many arcade goers, the long arduous quest to learn the moves and return to the back of the arcade to seek revenge on the tough young punks who were the ones to draw first blood.

Of course, via word-of-mouth the moves soon spread among schoolyards and dockyards, with people learning the 90-degree clockwise and anti-clockwise joystick rotations, plus the super-tricky forward, down and then down-toward-plus-attack moves. There was a very definite sense of satisfaction pulling off your first Dragon Punch – it was like a coming-of-age ritual, like when in Africa, young bushmen would be sent out into the wilderness with a spear, not expected to return to the tribe until they had killed their first lion. A round of applause, stunned silence, the slapping of backs, and then a bag of soggy chips from the chippy next door. That was the celebration and atmosphere of the time.

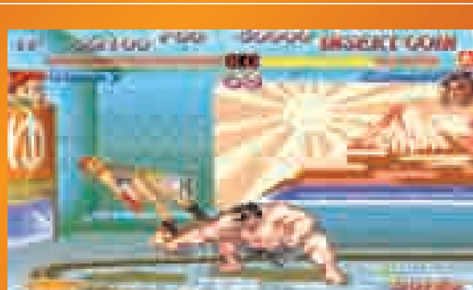


» A successful Dragon Punch slams into Blanka's jaw, sending him flying. Notice the fishermen in the background, cheering eagerly.

Further training would eventually lead to the four main bosses: Balrog, Vega, Sagat and M-Bison. But did you know? In Japan M-Bison was known as Vega, and Vega was called Balrog, which of course meant that Balrog was known as M-Bison. But it was believed that in the West, M-Bison sounded too similar to Mike Tyson, so it was changed. Sagat, on the other hand, remained exactly the same. And for trivia buffs, his scar was created by Ryu at the end of the last *Fighting Street* tournament, since Sagat was originally the final boss. This means that from the original, only Ryu, Ken and Sagat made it over. Curiously, *Final Fight* was originally going to be the sequel to the original *Fighting Street*, but after people complained that it looked too different, Capcom went back to make a proper sequel. This means that it's thanks to the moustachioed Haggar and chums, that there was the fighting revolution seen in the early Nineties. It was a time of change, of sweeping movements, almost like during Tsarist Russia when there was the great people's revolt. Things were changing. Of course it proved popular, with many returning, which eventually led to the great *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior* merchandising wave. There were action figures, fluffy toys, folders, comics, trading cards, specialised shoe-laces and a whole variety of other things. But, in truth, these little extras were superfluous; they meant nothing, they simply clouded the real object of people's desire: playing the damned arcade game! It was so popular, Capcom started to butcher its own arcade games (*Strider, Ghouls & Ghosts* and so on), in order to satisfy the massive demand for the amazing brawler. Boards cost in the region of £820, but arcade owners couldn't buy enough to satisfy demand. Illegal copies also started to turn up, sometimes with bizarre hacks, like being able to throw multiple fire-balls or throwing them whilst actually performing a Dragon Punch. Plus, of course, there were soon home ports, which people loved despite the slowdown, and then console-based clones as well. *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior* rode a long-lasting wave of success, with further iterations too, but, it could be said, once people had seen this new formula, there was never again that feeling of awe felt the first time. Today the game can be played anywhere thanks to multiple handheld ports and even availability on Xbox Live Arcade. And, no, it's still not possible to eat a profiterole while playing. *Street Fighter II* demands your full attention and, by goodness, you will give it.


» Guile performs a sweeping kick but Blanka deftly jumps up to avoid, preparing to retaliate with a downwards claw attack.

OTHER VERSIONS

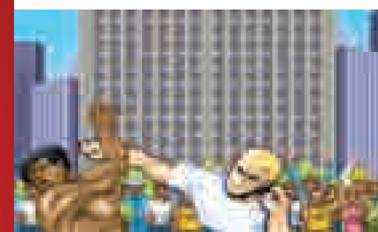


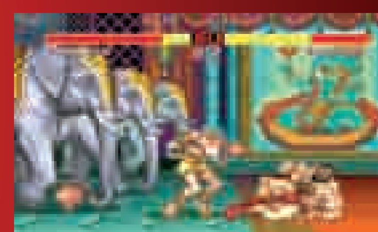
With the popularity of *Street Fighter II*, it was inevitable that Capcom would create follow-ups. The first increased the speed and allowed you to choose the four boss characters to play as, while soon after this they developed and released *Super Street Fighter II*. Along with the expected visual and audio improvements, this instalment effectively doubled the character roster of the first game from eight to 16. The New Challengers included: British Delta Red military woman Cammy; an American Indian, living in Mexico, called Thunder Hawk; Caribbean musician Dee Jay; and finally Bruce Lee look-alike Fei Long. The gameplay was slightly slower than Turbo, which angered some fans, but this was then later updated, also adding the moniker Turbo, and making it much faster. In the end there were several variations of the original and, while it could be argued some are better (we're sure forums all over the world are housing this debate), the original is still very important.

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1991
- » **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £40 + (PCB BOARD)


» The classic Arcade intro which, quite oddly, features characters which aren't actually in the game. It's still awesome though.


» Zangief lies on the floor and tells Dhalsim stories of his time as a boy in Soviet Russia, wrestling bears and pulling potato carts.

OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES

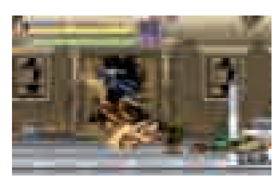
FIGHTING STREET, STREET FIGHTER 2: TURBO, SUPER TURBO, CHAMPION EDITION, STREET FIGHTER ALPHA, STREET FIGHTER III

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

GHOULS 'N GHOSTS
SYSTEMS: ARCADE
YEAR: 1988

STRIDER
SYSTEMS: ARCADE
YEAR: 1989

FINAL FIGHT
SYSTEMS: ARCADE
YEAR: 1989







STREET FIGHTER III: 3RD STRIKE

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Released: 2000
Featured Format: Dreamcast
Expect to pay: $10

WHAT DO YOU GIVE THE GENRE THAT HAD IT ALL? CAPCOM SEARCHED HARD AND IN COMING UP WITH THE ANSWER, TRANSFORMED THE FIGHTING SCENE FOREVER…



» Twelve and Alex go head to head, but who's going to win?

Where do fighting games go from here? That was the question 2D beat-'em-up fans were asking after *Street Fighter Alpha 3* had seemingly wrapped up the genre by stuffing it with as many new features as there seemed possible to include. Alpha Counters, tiered Supers, Ism fighting styles, Variable Combos, air recovery… what next? What else could even be possible? With its *Street Fighter III* series, Capcom answered that question with one word: parrying.

The final addition to the series, *3rd Strike*, refined the parry system to perfection, something that has helped the game survive right through to the modern day scene. To parry, you have to tap forward (high or medium) or tap down (low) in time with your opponent's attack. Clearly, this is a huge risk because getting the timing or even direction wrong means your opponent's attack lands and if it's the start of a long combo, particularly true against Yun players, you'll be smacking your head that you didn't opt for the safer choice of blocking instead. So why bother parrying anyway? How can this risky move bring anything to the genre?

The answer is simple. A successful parry is indicated by a blue flash and your opponent freezing for a fraction of a second: enough time to squeeze a counterattack in to turn the tide of the match. In addition to this, you don't lose any life via chip damage when parrying, giving you one desperate attempt to survive via parries if your opponent charges at you with a Super Art to try to finish you off. While it seems like a small addition, parrying rewrote the age-old rules of *Street Fighter* that had been drawn up and adhered to since *World Warrior*. To give an example, jumping in to attack Ryu or Ken was a stupid idea because they could dragon punch you at will. Now, you can jump and parry the

WHAT ELSE COULD EVEN BE POSSIBLE? CAPCOM ANSWERED WITH ONE WORD: PARRYING

RAP ATTACK

Not to be confused with rap-metal group 3rd Strike, the music for Capcom's fighting was a strange hybrid of rap, electronica and jazz. Most fans were turned off by the intro rapping, which certainly hasn't dated well, though the in-game music holds up much better. Also cute is the way the music for each stage is effectively split into three sections. The first section of music will play for the first round, no matter how long it lasts, and will only segue into the second section when the next round begins and once again for the final round (if needed). A cool touch.





» Not the strongest character in the air, Necro has Dhalsim-like attacks allowing him to hassle opponents from distance.



» One of the toughest match-ups in *3rd Strike* due to Akuma's ability to keep Hugo at distance.

I'VE GOT THE POWER

Picking the right super is essential to mastering your chosen character in *3rd Strike*. These are the ones you're most likely to see…



SHIPPU JINRAI KYAKU (KEN)

Ken's best super. It can be comboed off crouching short kicks, crouching medium kick, crouching medium punch, Ken's target combo and his back + medium kick overhead. You will find a way of landing his super during a match…



CORKSCREW BLOW (DUDLEY)

Dudley pushes his fist forward and hits the opponent five times. Its main use is comboed off low punches or his overhead Dart Shot for a fatal mix-up but it recovers quickly; it's one of the few supers that isn't easily punished even when blocked.



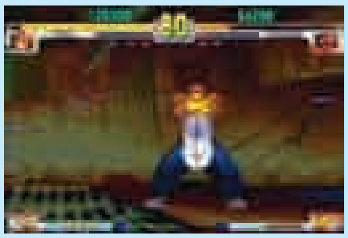
HOUYOKU SEN (CHUN-LI)

Chun-Li's crouching medium kick leaves the opponent reeling in hit stun just long enough for quick players to see if the opponent has been hit or blocked the kick. Why? If the crouching medium kick hits, they cancel into this deadly super.



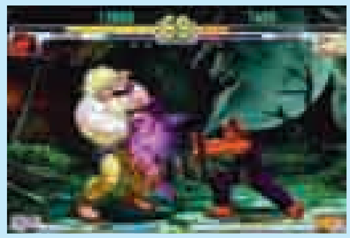
AEGIS REFLECTOR (URIEN)

Urien summons a pink reflector wall and can control the distance and height at which it comes out. It's often used as a corner trap to set up his juggle combos or after a shoulder, to set up his unblockable combo. One of the tougher supers to use.



GENEI-JIN (YUN)

The best super in *3rd Strike*, thanks to its short meter, high damage potential and versatility. When activated, Yun can juggle opponents until the bar completely drains and, while using his palm strike in these combos is tricky, the damage makes it well worth learning.



MESSATSU GOU HADOU (AKUMA)

Akuma's best super – he has four options to use it. With one bar, he can either go for a super fireball on the ground or in the air. With two stocks of super, he can either go for a KKZ (best used for chip damage) or his classic Raging Demon super…

HOME FIGHTING

Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike has a fairly strong presence in the UK, thanks to the small community keeping the game alive at all costs. Your two best ports of call are Trocadero arcade and Casino arcade in Goodge Street, with most players drifting towards the latter thanks to the shabby state of the sticks at Trocadero. For tournaments, NeoEmpire.com hosts regular ranking battles and Super Vs Battle on the 27 and 28 January in 2007, a fighting games event with *3rd Strike* one of the featured tournaments. All the best UK players will be in attendance, so it's definitely worth visiting the website for details, regardless of your skill level!



dragon punch as it comes towards you, giving YOU the advantage. Conversely, the Ryu or Ken player will want to take the parry into account and maybe hit you out of the air with a standing jab instead, which doesn't do much damage but leaves the player relatively safe it it's countered. Even finishing your opponent off with a Super Art had to be done with care, as your opponent could parry the entire thing if he is expecting and is good enough (look up 'Diago SRK' on YouTube for the perfect example of what we're talking about). Unlike the Tardy Counter in *Rival Schools*, parrying still carried enough risk that players weren't fearful of attacking because of it. What you had to do was be sneaky. Delay moves. Attack high when your opponent thinks low. Throw them, which can't be parried. The new mind games this simple move opened up breathed new life into the genre, turning it on its head. Then, the Super Arts. Rather than the system seen in *Street Fighter Alpha*, Capcom forced players to pick one of three Super Arts before the match itself. Picking your Super Art would often depend on your opponent's character of choice and change your style of play. Some of the stranger choices included Twelve's X.C.O.P.Y. (Twelve transforms into the mirror image of his opponent), Remy's Blue Nocturne (Remy pulls a pose and counterattacks if he gets hit), Yang's Seiei-Enbu (shadowy trails also hit the opponent) and Urien's Aegis

MAGICAL MOMENT

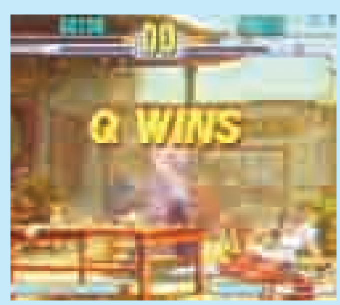
While Daigo's infamous parrying is undoubtedly the most famous moment, there's one other moment that touched a nerve with *3rd Strike* fans – Japanese Q player Kuroda single-handedly taking out the best two American players, Ricky Ortiz and Justin Wong, at SBO 2005. Given Q is one of the worst characters, it was a real shock…





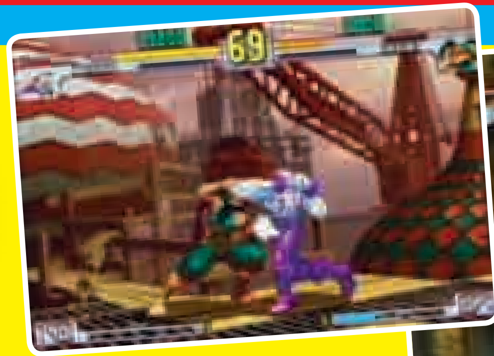








» Dudley proves that it's perfectly possible to "fight like a gentlemen". Makota is far from happy.





» The animation is absolutely gorgeous, arguably only eclipsed by latter day sequels to the *Guilty Gear* series.

Reflector (a temporary pink wall that hits opponents and reflects projectiles). Ryu's Denjin Hadouken super has long been a fan favourite, a fireball that can be charged and is unblockable – the only way to escape is with a perfectly timed parry or by getting out of its way with another evasive move. While most Super Arts have been whittled down to one viable choice per character, even all these years of high-level play have left Super Art choices wide open for certain characters – Makoto, Oro, Ryu, Elena on EX moves. These moves, also new to *Street Fighter*, allowed you to burn some meter for a stronger special move – EX hadoukens knock players down, EX dragon punches require more parries and EX hurricane kicks are better for combos, to give the examples for Ryu and Ken. So what's it to be? Save meter for Super or burn it to pressure with fireballs instead?

As *3rd Strike* was played at arcades year in year out, new techniques were quickly discovered, extending its life.

ALMOST ALL OF CAPCOM'S FIGHTING GAMES ARE PROVED TO HAVE SOME SORT OF GLITCH THAT CAN BE ABUSED BUT 3RD STRIKE'S GLITCH WAS RELATIVELY MILD

and Sean are a few characters who can choose between two or even all three of their Super Arts and remain competitive. It speaks volumes for the strength of the original design that this can even be said.

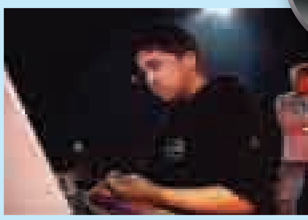
The differences between Super Arts weren't just what the character would do but also how much meter he could hold onto at one time and how many Super Arts he could stock. Not only did this affect how and when Super Arts would be used but this would also have a direct influence Partition buffering was the name given to charge moves where the charge was split up and therefore the move was easily disguised – charging before and after a dash, for example. Unblockables were discovered for Urien and Oro, thanks to cute setups involving their Super Arts that were impossible to block and could only be parried with tight timing (later conversions would take this feature out though players tend to ignore these revisions for the 'pure' original). In addition

THE WORLD'S GREATEST

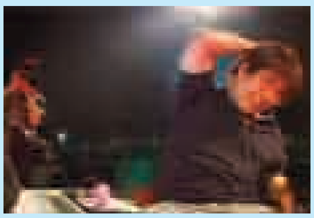
With the game still proving the strongest draw in the global fighting scene, there are dominant Japanese players who stand out from the crowd.



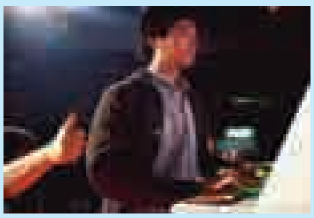
DESHIKEN
With Daigo's rusty showing in the last EVO tournament where fans were shocked by his level of play, most eyes have fallen to Deshiken as the best Ken player around.



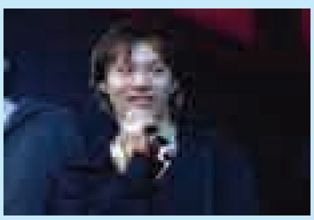
OHNUKI
Winner of last year's EVO, this Chun-Li player embodies the Japanese ethos of playing the percentages, taking very few risks and having almost perfect execution.



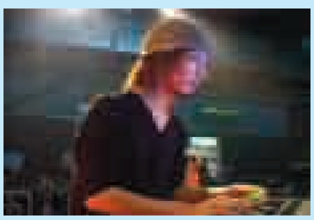
KOKUJIN
A crowd favourite, Kokujin's pained reactions to losing and excitement at winning are almost as fun to watch as it is watching his Dudley tear up opponents in the corner.



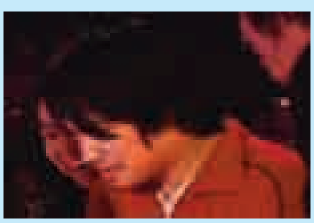
NITTO
This year's EVO winner, every Nitto match is a textbook example of how to play Yun and abuse his Genei-Jin super to its fullest potential. An excellent player.



MOV
Another Chun-Li player, MOV plays with more flair and exuberance than Ohnuki. Though his riskier style of play isn't as consistent, he's more fun to watch.



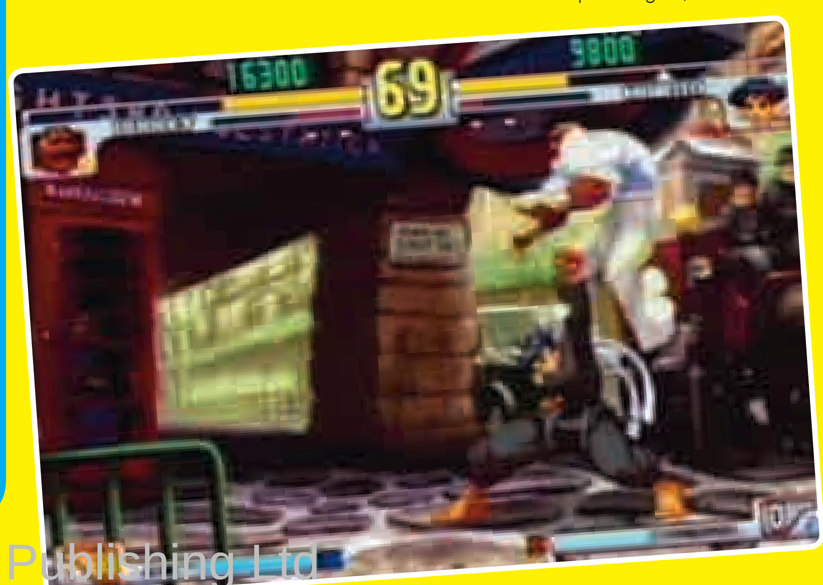
DAIGO
Some time away from *3rd Strike* has seen his level of play drop to alarming levels, but, still, there's no denying the impact Daigo has had on the *Street Fighter* community.



KO
The best Japanese Yun player, he no longer travels to international tournaments but is still a well known name on the circuit.



GOEMON
One of the rare players opting for Yang over Yun, Goemon's relentless rushdown style makes him a real joy to watch.

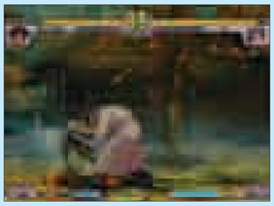


THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Each character in *3rd Strike* has different attributes, which leads to a vast array of playing styles.

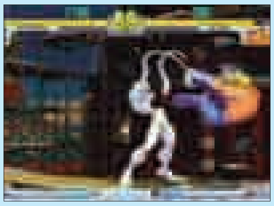
MAKOTO

With the slowest walking speed and no reliable defensive moves, Makoto has to rely on overwhelming her opponent with her ridiculous dash speed and mix-ups leading into her karakusa grab.



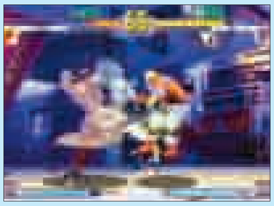
TWELVE

As one of the weaker characters, Twelve has to use his air-dash to constantly change the pace of the match-up and switch between attacking and running away, so opponents never get comfortable.



Q

Q is often waiting on the back foot for mistakes, so he can punish them with his ridiculous power. Taunting three times also gives him a defensive boost, if Q can find the time to squeeze them in…



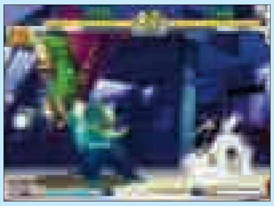
IBUKI

This female ninja is fast, mobile and can stun opponents quickly. While she loses in a toe-to-toe brawl against most characters, she has plenty of trickery to get around a tight defence and dictate the match.



YUN

Most play defensively until they've built enough meter to activate their Genei-Jin super. A good Yun player will try to dictate the pace of the match with dive kicks to ensure opponents don't chase to him too hard.



to that, players also learnt how to use eagerness to parry to their advantage. Parry traps were predictable moves purposely used to trick the other player into parrying and counterattacking, with the original parried move immediately cancelled into a Super Art to blow through the opponent's counterattack.

The most common trick was kara-cancelling. Almost all of Capcom's fighting games are proved to have some sort of glitch or trick that can be abused, but unlike *Alpha 3*'s crouch cancelling that led to infinite combos or *Capcom Vs SNK 2*'s roll-cancelling that turned many players off, *3rd Strike*'s glitch was relatively mild. Literally translating to 'empty cancel', a kara-cancel is performing one move then almost immediately performing another for the benefit of added range. Typically used for throws, the most common kara-cancel is pressing medium kick then throw with Chun-Li.

With so many techniques on offer, *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike* was able to offer something for everyone, whatever their skill level – the easy combos for beginners, kara-cancelling and partition buffering for pros. These techniques also ignore the fact that parries allow for an extremely flashy and offensive style of play, where confident players forego blocking in favour of risky parries. Every new technique affects the ebb and flow of the match and gives players something to aim for.

Years of high-level competition in Japan, America and central Europe have now seen the *3rd Strike* cast whittled down to three characters regularly winning tournaments – Yun, Chun-Li and Ken. The EVO results for last year showed the top eight players to be made up of four Yun players, three Chun-Li players and a Ken. Most of today's talk about *3rd Strike* comes from how to change the settings to add more balance, while the purists are happy with the game in its current state. After all, it survived all these years for a reason. It's as close as we're ever likely to get to the perfect 2D fighting game. Which leaves only one question – where do fighting games go from here?

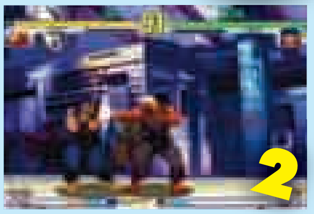


HOW TO PLAY

The Retro Gamer guide to enjoying *3rd Strike*



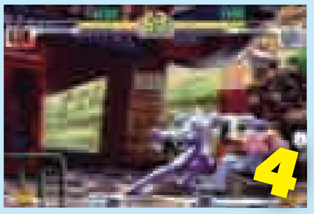
First of all, you should endeavour to learn your character's best normals. Chun-Li's fierce punch, Ken's crouching medium kick and Dudley's fierce kick are all good examples.



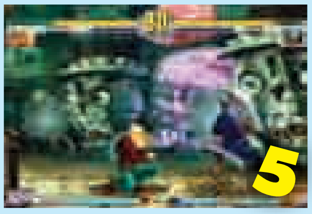
Throwing is performed by pressing light punch and light kick together. Learning when to throw and to tech-throw is extremely important…



Then, you need to learn to apply special moves. Some are useless (Alex's Tornado DDT) while others are essential (Yang's Mantis Slash, seen here).



Now you need to learn combos. These are endless, so what you eventually opt for depends on your character and style of play.



Finally, the most overlooked aspect of *Street Fighter*. Footsies. The art of dancing outside your opponent's optimum attack range, trying to bait a mistake.



Then move in for the kill. Ideally, you want to finish the match with something that won't give the opponent a chance of a parry comeback…

STREET FIGHTER FAMILY TREE



POCKET · MANGA · CUTESY · VERSUS · 3D · CUTESY

STREET FIGHTER



- Arcade/Multi
- 1987
- Not a particularly huge hit, *Street Fighter* had just two playable characters. But it did boast pressure-sensitive pads that governed the strength of your punches and kicks depending on how hard you hit them. Sadly, they were easily broken.

STREET FIGHTER II



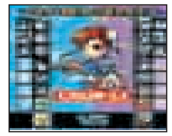
- Game Boy
- 1995
- Despite its monochrome display, Nintendo's chunky little handheld actually did quite a good job of recreating the arcade original. Sadly, a lack of animation made the action look somewhat jerky and fragmented.

STREET FIGHTER 2010



- NES
- 1990
- One of the most abstract instalments in the *Street Fighter* series, this starred Ken as a scientist in the year 2010. The game was very playable, with side-scrolling levels and intricate combat that allowed interaction with the scenery.

SNK VS. CAPCOM: MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM



- Neo-Geo Pocket Color
- 1999
- Thanks to the power of SNK's handheld, this mimicked SNK and Capcom's game extremely well. Everything was cut down slightly, and the characters were super-deformed to make them easier to see.

STREET FIGHTER II: THE WORLD WARRIOR



- Arcade/Multi
- 1991
- This was the title that propelled the *Street Fighter* series into the limelight. With eight playable characters, plenty of balanced moves, locations all around the world, and a decent home conversion on the SNES, this was a classic.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: TURBO REVIVAL



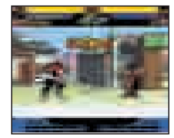
- GBA
- 2001
- With ropey controls and awful music, this was a real low point for the series, especially as the SNES and Mega Drive conversions were so much better. This also featured an uncomfortable mix of *Super* and *Alpha* art styles.

SNK VS. CAPCOM CARD FIGHTERS CLASH



- Neo-Geo Pocket Color
- 1999
- SNK capitalised on the *Pokémon*-induced trading-card craze with the release of the *SNK Vs Capcom Card Fighter's Clash* series. Three variations were available and the action was strictly turn-based card battling.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA



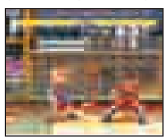
- GBC
- 2000
- Despite being a competent machine, the Game Boy Color couldn't do justice to a game that was famous for its manga-style characters. British developer Crawfish had used all the power available, however, and this was still very playable.

POCKET FIGHTER



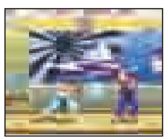
- Wonderswan
- 2000
- Although Bandai's Wonderswan was never available in the UK, it built up quite a following in Japan. Capcom's cutesy beat-'em-up, *Pocket Fighter*, translated well to the machine, though it was only available in monochrome.

STREET FIGHTER II: CHAMPION EDITION



- Arcade/Multi
- 1992
- This was almost the same as *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior*, though there were slight tweaks and players were now allowed to use the four boss characters. Each of the backgrounds had also been updated with new colours.

STREET FIGHTER II TURBO: HYPER FIGHTING



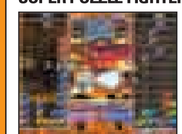
- Arcade/Multi
- 1992
- Many fans consider this the best in the series thanks to its speed and combos. Nintendo signed the game as a SNES exclusive, but Capcom got around the deal by simply renaming it *Special Champion Edition* for the Mega Drive.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3



- GBA
- 2002
- The GBA conversion of *Street Fighter Alpha 3* was stunning. With 38 playable fighters, sublime animation and flawless control, it was a real shame to see Crawfish go bankrupt after such a great translation.

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II TURBO



- GBA
- 2003
- Based on the cult arcade hit, this *Tetris*-like puzzle game converted well to the Game Boy Advance; it was quite an impressive feat considering that the original game was running on Capcom's powerful CPSII arcade board.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: THE TOURNAMENT BATTLE



- Arcade
- 1993
- With four arcade cabinets linked together, *The Tournament Battle* allowed eight players to test their skills. Unfortunately, players had to move between machines between fights meaning that any credits in the machine were lost.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: THE NEW CHALLENGERS



- Arcade/Multi
- 1993
- Featuring four new fighters – Cammy, T. Hawk, Fei Long and Dee Jay – *Super Street Fighter* was supposed to be the next evolution in the series. However, the speed had been reduced dramatically and fans weren't impressed.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II TURBO



- Arcade/Multi
- 1994
- After so many complaints about the speed of *Super Street Fighter*, Capcom hurriedly addressed the problem as well as introducing super moves just like those in *Darkstalkers* (which was also released in 1994).

DARKSTALKERS



- Arcade/Multi
- 1994
- Showcasing Capcom's new manga art style, *Darkstalkers* was a test game for *Street Fighter Alpha*. Featuring air blocking and super moves, this played a lot like *Street Fighter* (apart from its numerous enhancements, obviously).

DARKSTALKERS CHRONICLE: THE CHAOS TOWER



- PSP
- 2005
- Despite featuring gorgeous graphics, The Chaos Tower is let down by its fiddly controls and insanely long loading times. A shame really, as it really is a nice looking 2D fighter.

STREET FIGHTER THE MOVIE



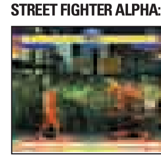
- Arcade/Multi
- 1995
- Based on the film of the same name, this was possibly the worst game of the entire *Street Fighter* series. With digitised fighters like those from *Mortal Kombat*, even the classic gameplay couldn't save this awful game.

NIGHT WARRIORS: DARKSTALKERS' REVENGE



- Arcade/Multi
- 1995
- Like *SFII: Champion Edition*, this was merely an upgrade of *Darkstalkers* with remixed colours and playable boss characters. By now, popular fighters like Demitri and Morrigan were becoming an established part of the series.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA: WARRIORS' DREAMS



- Arcade/Multi
- 1995
- Taking the series back to basics, *Street Fighter Alpha*'s story was set before the original *Street Fighter* game. This title sported a new manga look and a handful of characters from older Capcom games, including Guy from *Final Fight*.

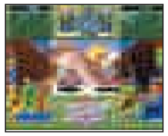
STREET FIGHTER ZERO 3: DOUBLE UPPER



- PSP
- 2006
- A perfect port of the arcade version, this brought in faces from other Capcom fighters such as Maki, Ingrid and Eagle. However, the PSP's dodgy D-pad made V-Ism combos almost impossible.

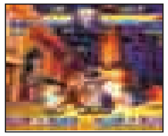
SPANNING EIGHTEEN YEARS AND APPARENTLY STILL GOING STRONG – THE STREET FIGHTER SERIES HAS A LONG AND DISTINGUISHED FAMILY TREE…

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER



- Arcade
- 1996
- Cashing in on the *Street Fighter* phenomenon, *Puzzle Fighter* was a simple puzzle game in which the aim was to link coloured jewels together. Super-deformed characters threw kicks and punches each time you were successful.

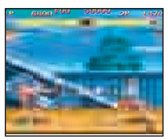
POCKET FIGHTER



- Arcade/Multi
- 1997
- Taking the super-deformed characters from *Super Puzzle Fighter* and blending them with the traditional *Street Fighter* gameplay, this cutesy one-on-one beat-'em-up was a nice variation on the standard game.

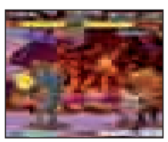


HYPER STREET FIGHTER II: THE ANNIVERSARY EDITION



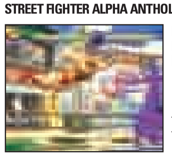
- PS2/Arcade
- 2003
- Featuring all the moves and characters from *SFII: The World Warrior, Champion Edition, Turbo: Hyper Fighting, Super SFII* and *Super SFII Turbo*, this should be the definitive pack for all *Street Fighter* fans. You win!

VAMPIRE DARKSTALKERS COLLECTION



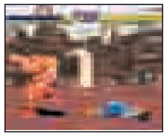
- PS2
- 2005
- Only available in the land of the rising sun, this is the perfect compilation for anyone with a love of Capcom's monstrous take on the Street Fighter games. Just make sure your PS2 plays Japanese games…

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA ANTHOLOGY



- PS2
- 2006
- While the introduction of classic Ism modes made for plenty of fun, it was the fact that this was the first ever arcade-perfect port of *Alpha 3* on a console that really excited fans.

STREET FIGHTER EX



- Arcade/PSone
- 1996
- This was Capcom's attempt to take *Street Fighter* into three dimensions, and despite a lot of attention *EX* lacked the precision or responsiveness of its predecessors. Worse still, a lack of polygons meant the fighters looked blocky.

STREET FIGHTER EX 2



- Arcade/PSone
- 1998
- After the disappointingly geometric *Street Fighter EX*, the sequel to Capcom's 3D beat-'em-up was certainly far prettier, boasting many additional polygons. Unfortunately, the gameplay was just as spongy and unresponsive.

STREET FIGHTER EX 3



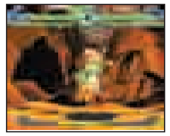
- PS2
- 2000
- Like many PS2 launch titles, this really didn't show off what Sony's new machine was capable of. With garish graphics, slowdown aplenty and questionable dynamics, this really wasn't any better than its predecessors.

CAPCOM FIGHTING JAM



- Arcade/PS2/Xbox
- 2004
- Despite the intriguing mix of characters from the *Alpha* series, *Darkstalkers, 3rd Strike, Red Earth* and *Street Fighter II*, it flopped thanks to the horrendous graphics and stale gameplay.

X-MEN VS. STREET FIGHTER



- Arcade/Multi
- 1996
- After successfully bringing the X-Men to life in *Children Of The Atom*, Capcom spiced things up with the introduction of *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter*. The game allowed you to choose two fighters and switch between them mid-match.

MARVEL SUPER HEROES VS. STREET FIGHTER



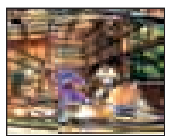
- Arcade/Multi
- 1997
- Following on from *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter*, this offered the same two-on-two gameplay with a selection of new characters. However, while the gameplay was just as good the backgrounds weren't as creative or polished.

MARVEL VS. CAPCOM



- Arcade/Multi
- 1998
- Continuing the now popular two-on-two gameplay of the *Vs* series, *Marvel Vs. Capcom* expanded the formula by offering a wider range of characters, including an enormous selection from Capcom's impressive history.

CAPCOM VS. SNK



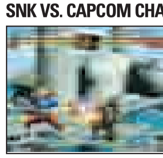
- Arcade/Multi
- 2000
- Teaming up with long-term rival SNK, this Capcom offering allowed players to match up fighters from their favourite SNK and Capcom series. This really kept 2D fighting games alive in a 3D-dominated market.

CAPCOM VS. SNK 2



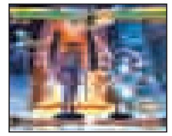
- Arcade/Multi
- 2001
- Although this didn't really offer anything new, the fact that it's been translated to so many formats has helped to keep Capcom's 2D games in the limelight. Sadly, the standard controls have been simplified, though they can be adjusted.

SNK VS. CAPCOM CHAOS



- Arcade/Multi
- 2003
- Developed by SNK, this only featured one-on-one matches and had a grungier look than Capcom's clean, manga style art of late. Although appreciated by SNK fans, the company has produced better-quality games in the past.

VAMPIRE SAVIOR



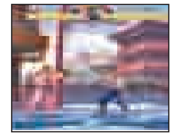
- Arcade/Multi
- 1997
- The third and final instalment in the *Darkstalkers* series, this featured some new characters and moves. Several Japanese arcades featured an updated version (*Vampire Savior 2*), while the SEGA Saturn received a superb conversion.

MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 2



- Arcade/Multi
- 1999
- More of the same, *Marvel Vs. Capcom 2* arrived in the arcade just one year after its predecessor and was converted to the Dreamcast. More recently, the game appeared on the Xbox and a Live-enabled version is expected soon.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2



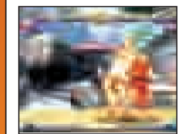
- Arcade/Multi
- 1996
- Despite its revamped look, the original *Alpha* game only featured a handful of characters and backgrounds. *Alpha 2* rectified this somewhat and was even more beautiful thanks to additional detail and animation.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3



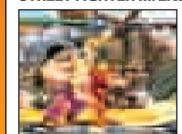
- Arcade/Multi
- 1998
- With just about every *Street Fighter* character included, this was the definitive game in the *Alpha* series. Unfortunately, while it played well and looked fantastic, the musical compositions were mostly bland and uninspired.

STREET FIGHTER III: NEW GENERATION



- Arcade/Dreamcast
- 1997
- Despite its stunning animation and clever parrying system, *Street Fighter III* wasn't particularly well received due to its lacklustre line-up of characters and the removal of certain special moves.

STREET FIGHTER III: 2ND IMPACT



- Arcade/Dreamcast
- 1998
- Rectifying many of the gripes that fans had with *Street Fighter III: New Generation*, it was unfortunate that *2nd Impact* arrived so close to *Alpha 3*. This and its predecessor were available in a Dreamcast double pack.

STREET FIGHTER III: 3RD STRIKE



- Arcade/Dreamcast
- 1999
- With a far healthier range of characters, improved backgrounds and tighter gameplay, Capcom finally got it right with *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*. Sadly, it arrived so late in the series that gamers had moved on to titles like *Tekken*.

ANNIVERSARY

FANTASIA

NOT A DREAM WE WANT TO HAVE AGAIN



- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **RELEASED:** 1991
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+



HISTORY

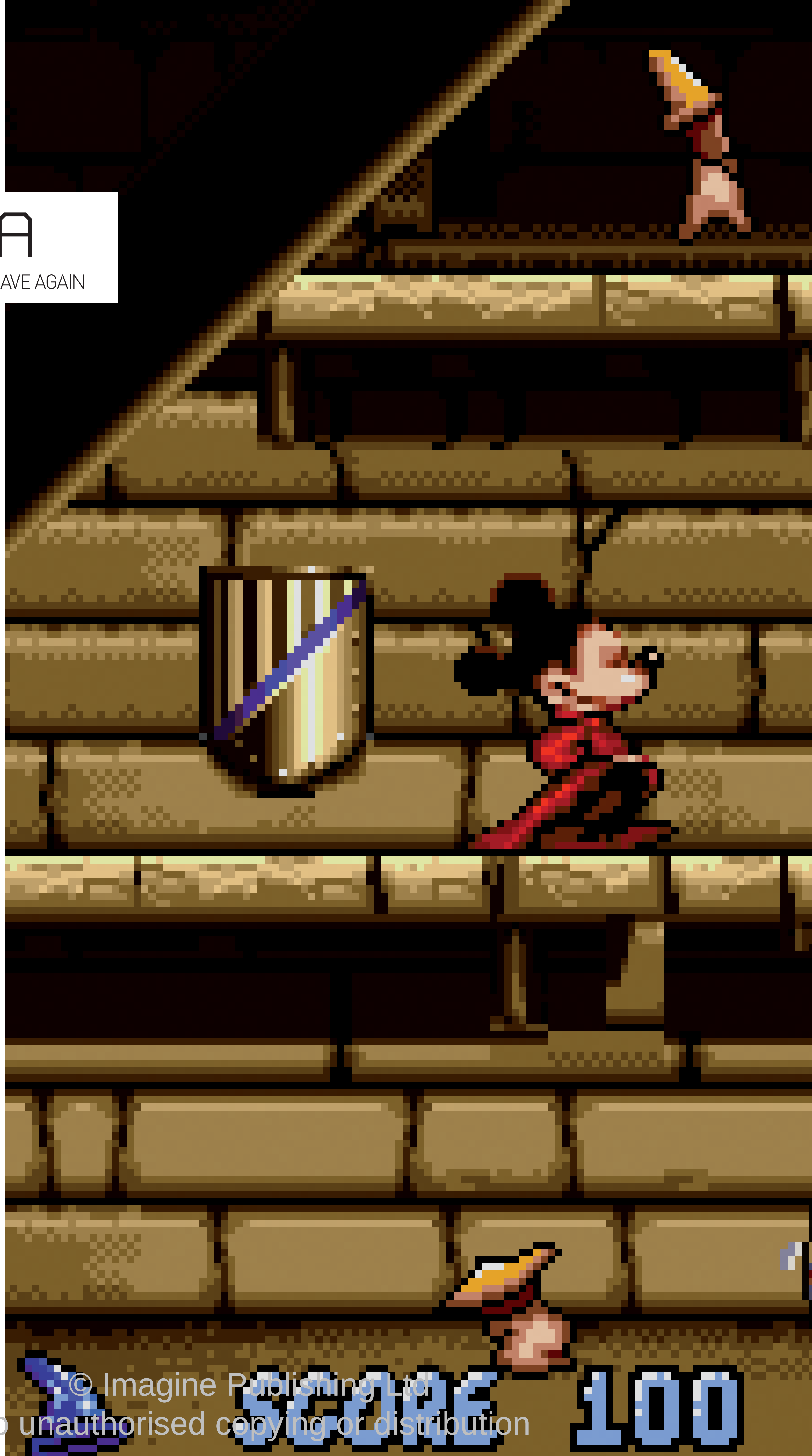
Fantasia was not a great game, hell it wasn't even a good game. In fact, if we had to make a list of the worst film-to-game adaptations of all time, it would make the top five. "So why on earth are you covering it?" I hear you ask. Simple, it's a reminder to us all that no matter how perfect a game may have been, there's no guarantee that the follow-up would be just as good.

Frustratingly, *Fantasia* could have actually been something worth getting excited about. After all, the original *Castle Of Illusion* was an absolutely stunning platformer that brought Mickey Mouse to life on Sega's 16-bit console and tricked gamers into believing that they were playing an interactive cartoon (yes, it really was that good).

Fantasia initially appears to be a more than worthy follow-up to the excellent *Castle Of Illusion*. The gorgeously drawn sprites were beautiful and perfectly captured the look of the original film, while Sega's mastery of the Mega Drive's sound chip meant that *Fantasia*'s many compositions were as authentic as possible. Indeed, *Fantasia* looked and sounded like a dream. Unfortunately, it played like a nightmare.

Mickey may have moved with exceptional style and grace in *Castle Of Illusion*, but here he had all the skill and finesse of a slug with crippling arthritis. Where collision detection was as tight as a drum in *COI*, *Fantasia*'s appeared to be non-existent and you'd find yourself constantly getting hit by enemies you thought you were clear of. Level design showed none of the imagination and thought that had appeared in *Castle Of Illusion*: there was no swinging on light bulb strings in overgrown kitchens, no walking upside-down, no swimming in giant teacups. Considering the dream-like style of the movie, it's saddening to think that Sega of America didn't put the same amount of creative thought into the videogame.

While we'd only normally recommend *Fantasia* to our worst enemies, it's worth tracking down and playing, if only so you can witness how a developer can get something so very wrong.




2 X
3 X

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learned about retrogaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you actually want it to. Granted a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can picked up for less than a fiver. It costs less than a ticket to rock concert, but it'll still rock your socks off.

MONSTER MAX

- **SYSTEM:** GAME BOY
- **RELEASED:** 1994
- **PUBLISHER:** RARE/TITUS
- **DEVELOPER:** JON RITMAN, BERNIE DRUMMOND



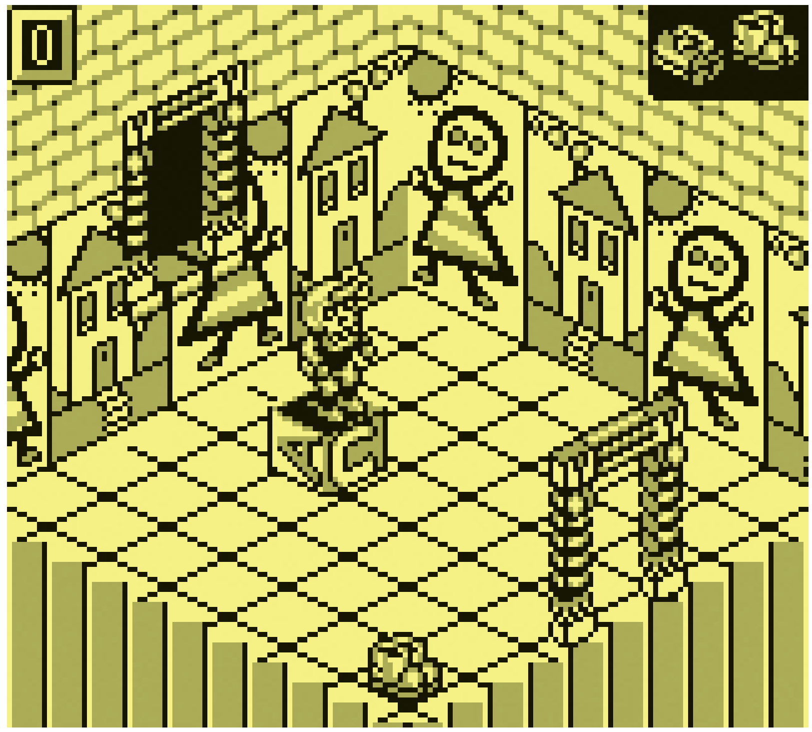
Jon Ritman (programmer) and Bernie Drummond (artist), as a game developing team, are legendary on the British isles. While the Eighties were rife with isometric platforming adventures, the output from these two always impressed – and in the case of *Head Over Heels* (1987) went on to become a timeless and much-loved classic. *Monster Max* is very similar to *Head Over Heels* in terms of style, puzzles and general mechanics, though as Ritman revealed, "*Max* was twice the size of *Head Over Heels*, with over 600 locations, and each location could be much bigger than any of the previous isometrics."

As you can imagine, it's an utterly brilliant game, which, thankfully, is as good today as it was in 1994; it was also a fitting swansong for the Ritman-Drummond duo. Unfortunately it didn't sell well (despite getting over 95% in several magazines) meaning today it's mostly unknown and goes for mere pennies unboxed. About 300 pennies to be precise.

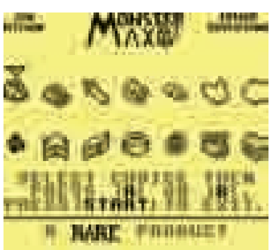
Those who play *Monster Max* for the first time are in for a treat; but make sure you play it on a handheld for the best experience (PC emulation doesn't do it justice). Everything about the game feels carefully placed and finely tuned; there's no sense of haphazard design, and the impression is that Jon Ritman really went all out to make it as polished as possible. There's no actual title screen, instead jumping right from an attract sequence to the gameplay. The music is an awesome medley of rockin' guitar licks (by Dave Wise), which are especially good through headphones and show what the GB's 4-channel sound chip can do.

Levels meanwhile are introduced with nifty four-line poems, explaining each level and introducing the main objectives; they might not win any literary awards, but they're very clever and work really well within the surreal framework of the game's narrative. This deserves special mention, purely for its outlandishly original premise. The titular Max is a hard-rocking monster (complete with electric guitar, which he plays during idle moments), who must traverse a series of TRULY deranged locations in order to save his planet from a music ban. It's the kind of blithely irreverent storyline we British are best at, but which is sadly being smothered by an increasingly American-centric industry.

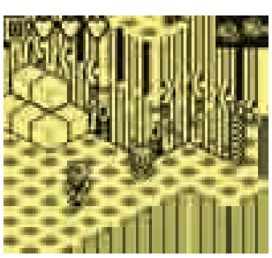
The best thing about the game though is how perfectly suited it is to the Game Boy. Despite being absolutely massive, each stage is divided into three bite-sized levels which are perfect for the bus ride to work – there's also a handy password system. It doesn't have the same dual character dynamic as *Head Over Heels*, but it doesn't need it, as the level design is nothing short of superb. In a way, it keeps the experience more refined, since you only need to focus on getting Max through everything. There are enemies, collapsing platforms, transporters, conveyor belts and switches, controllable robots, and several things not seen before (like ducking!). Unlike past Spectrum titles, which relied heavily on Game Over, *Monster Max* focuses on making the journey fun and painless. Continues are unlimited and you can restart any level you're having trouble with, but the game still remains very challenging. It's easily on par with *Head Over Heels* (go see for yourself), and if more of you had bought it back in the day we'd have written about it as a Classic Game. Atone for your mistakes and go buy it now.



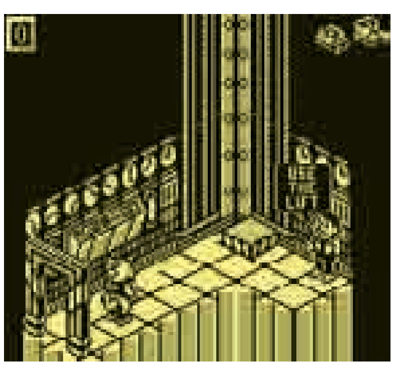
» It's not only one of the best looking monochrome GB games available, but Bernie Drummond's quirky vision and style make it a joy to behold.



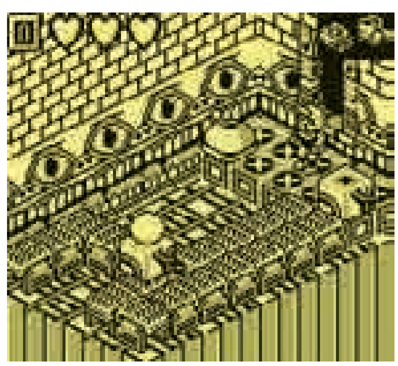
» Look at all the items which are available to collect and use during the game. The level of depth is astounding.



» Some rooms are huge, with multiple stories, platforms, doors and angles to work around. Sadly we can't convey the scope with these screens.



» Finishing a level gets you cash, and with enough cash you can get this cheeky chappy to activate the lift to the next stage.



» Two moveable blocks, a ball, some conveyor belts and a control switch. This is a classic Jon Ritman isometric puzzle.

RETRORATED







Publishers are starting to realise the importance and value of older titles, with many companies offering games for download. Microsoft has Xbox Live Arcade with plenty of old classics, Nintendo has the dedicated Virtual Console for retro games, while Sony is promising PSone and possibly other games for the PS3. In our mind one of the most exciting endeavours is WOOMB by Dutch company Bazix.

The basic principle behind it is making standalone MSX games available for download, contained with an executable shell which removes the need for fiddling with emulator. You simply click and play. The service is available throughout Europe, which is important, since Nintendo Europe have so far declined from adding any MSX support for the PAL Wii's VC, despite it being available in Japan. All WOOMB games are in English, and also come with high quality PDFs of the original manual – which not even Nintendo's supported VC games will be offering.

A lot of effort has gone into the WOOMB system (making it simple to use), and also the games themselves, some of which needed localising. It's a project which is almost perfect, and we only await further releases to cement its excellence. If you're an MSX or Japanese games fan, or even if you want to conveniently enjoy some retro games on your PC, then we highly recommend you support WOOMB. They're trying to set a long term precedent which we feel is worthy and commendable. Check out WOOMB.net for further info. At the time of print the following games were available, though for review we selected five of the following: *Aleste, Aleste 2, DASS, DiX, Frantic, Golvellius, Golvellius 2, Hydlide, Hydlide 2, Laydock, Nosh, Troxx, Undeadline, Zanac, Zanac Ex.*

GOLVELLIUS 2

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** COMPILE

» **PRICE:** 8.99 EURO



Currently the biggest title available to download (5mb), *Golvellius 2* is also one of the best games available – no surprise there, it was Compile, who had an excellent track record, who developed it (when it closed, Sega ended up with half their IP rights, including *Puyo Puyo,* while Aiky gained the other half).

The original was released on both MSX and Master System, though the two versions were very different. The second only came out on the MSX2/2+ and made use of the hardware's advanced scrolling capabilities. Although the second game is described as half sequel and half remake storywise, and we personally prefer the minimalist visuals of the first, *Golvellius 2* is the one to check out.

It takes the form of a *Zelda*-esque adventure/RPG with an overworld map, plus action-packed vertical and horizontal scrolling cave sections. It's an eclectic blend which works incredibly well. Special mention must also go to the music, which is never anything less than breathtaking. Although a bit slow at first, once outside the first town it's pure adventuring all the way!







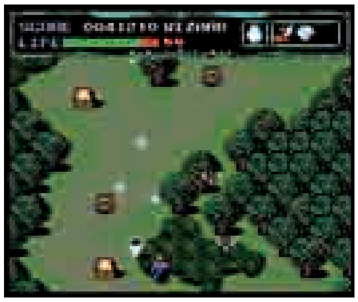
UNDEADLINE

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** T&E SOFT
» **PRICE:** 7.99 EURO

This was one of two vertical shmups which we tested, along with *Aleste 2,* and to be honest we think this might be our favourite. Whether it's because we're too familiar with *Power Strike* (*Aleste*'s pseudonym), the fact that it's more sedate and therefore a bit easier, or simply because of it's unique RPG-meets-shmup premise (choose either Fighter, Wizard or Ninja, each with different traits, and then shoot down demon hordes), this got a lot of playtime in the office. You can choose to start on any of the six levels, handy if you end up stuck on one, and along the way you can acquire additional weapons, use magic, and also raise the levels of your character. The unusual setup makes it stand out from the crowd. Great stuff.





ALESTE 2

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** COMPILE
» **PRICE:** 8.99 EURO

Tough. Damn tough. Absurdly, ridiculously, insanely tough. Those are some of the printable phrases that come to mind when playing *Aleste 2.* Having extensively played *Power Strike* on the Sega Master System we came into this with a slight feeling of familiarity. This, though, isn't the game's fault, and anyone who loves shoot-'em-ups, plus animé, will find it to be a challenging and excellent shoot-'em-up.

For an MSX game it's very fast and fluid, and the weapons system (where you can select a secondary weapon which can be powered up or swapped) allows for some great tactical gameplay. Granted, it's not the easiest game to get into, and you will die and die and die until you've really practised, but it's still an MSX classic and a damn fine blaster with an important historical lineage. Now you can enjoy it, and the original *Aleste*, thanks to WOOMB.





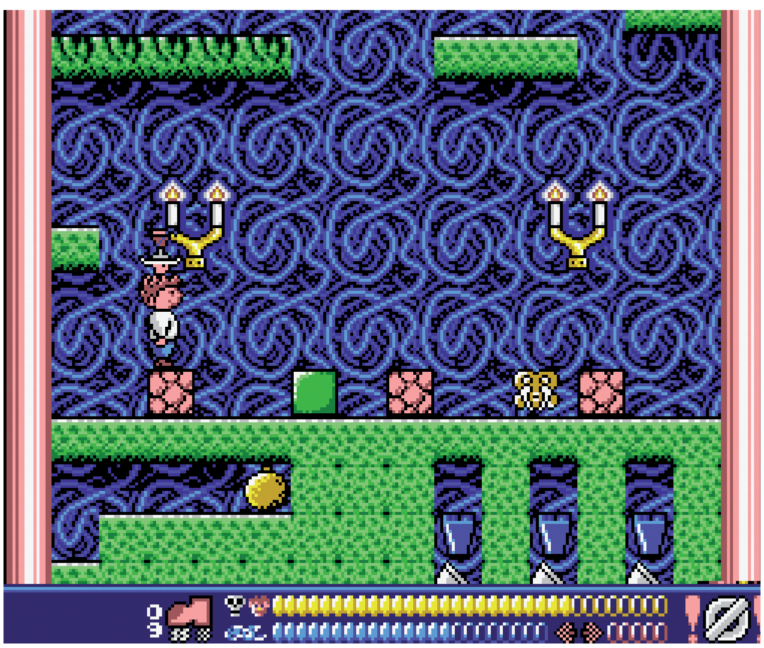
FRANTIC

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** ANMA
» **PRICE:** 6.99 EURO



At first we thought this Dutch-made game (released 1992) would be great fun. The music was excellent and the premise ingenious. You play a butler trapped in a hotel, with the goal being to navigate down the floors while carrying a beverage. In essence it's a cross between a traditional platformer and a puzzle game; you need to work out the best order of platforms to move to, while also avoiding enemies which instantly damage the beverage vessel. Unfortunately you can't see far below you, resulting in us becoming trapped on several occasions. The difficulty level is also too high, with it being nearly impossible to traverse floors without taking damage from great falls – it's also far too easy to break the glass you're carrying. Fantastic idea, but too frustrating.



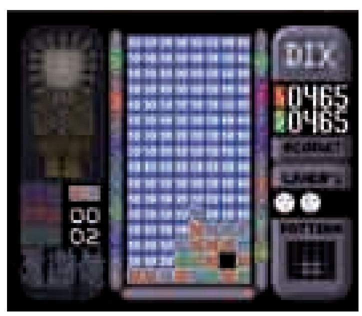
DIX

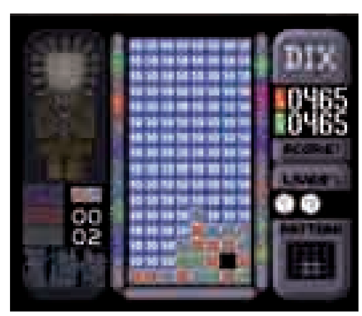
INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** MSX ENGINE
» **PRICE:** 6.99 EURO



This is quite a strange oddity in WOOMB's current list of games. It's the only puzzler available at the moment, and it's one which is quite unlike any other. Looking at the screens you might mistakenly think it's some kind of *Columns* variant, matching coloured blocks. But look to the lower right side: you'll see a shape of blocks. The object in each level is to form a pre-set number of this combination. So if it's six blocks (three high, two wide), you might need to make this combination 16 times to pass the level. This means the game's dynamic is reinvented for each separate level, and it also makes "learning" the game difficult – there's no zoning out, and once a full horizontal line has been filled it can't be erased. It's tough, but so different to everything else, it's worth checking out – especially if you like puzzlers.

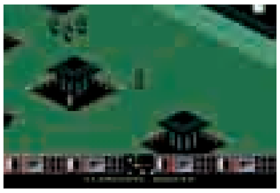




» YOU SHAME US, YOU SHAME YOURSELF EA

EA REPLAY

NEEDS MORE REWINDING



- » **SYSTEM:** PSP
- » **PRICE:** £34.99
- » **RELEASED:** NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** EA
- » **DEVELOPER:** EA CANADA – TEAM FUSION
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- » **FEATURED GAMES:** B.O.B., BUDOKAN, DESERT STRIKE, JUNGLE STRIKE, HAUNTING STARRING POLTERGUY, MUTANT LEAGUE FOOTBALL, ROAD RASH, ROAD RASH II, ROAD RASH III, SYNDICATE, ULTIMA: THE BLACK GATE, VIRTUAL PINBALL, WING COMMANDER, WING COMMANDER: SECRET MISSIONS



When first hearing EA was to raid its back catalogue, we became excited to the point of kidnapping mules and dancing in anticipation (*M.U.L.E.* was one of the best games ever published by EA). Regardless of what anyone says, Electronic Arts used to be the hero of the industry and championed designers as true artists; EA was a company you trusted would deliver awesome games, and it always did.

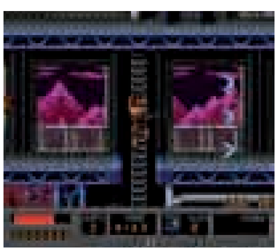
Unfortunately it didn't capitalise on the opportunity to utilise its amazing back catalogue. Let's cut through the buttery words – after the precedents first set by Taito and recently Sega, *EA Replay* is terrible and not worth your money. Do not buy it. This is such a wasted opportunity, we're almost too wracked with disappointment to continue writing. Only Namco and Altern8 ever release worse compilations, which we're certain they do just to tease Retro Gamer.

The reasons for our caustic words are many, so let's run through everything really quickly. Where is *M.U.L.E.*, *Populous*, *Madden*, *FIFA*, *PGA*, *Hard Hat Mack*, *Skate Or Die*, *Archon*, *Urban Strike*, or countless others? Actually, why does this compilation ONLY contain Mega Drive games? Smells like fetid laziness – grabbing an emulator and bunging a few ROMs on it. Boom, instant fetid compilation. This means you're stuck with inferior versions of games which were better either on other systems, like the Amiga (*Syndicate*), SNES (*B.O.B.*), or PSone (*Road Rash*). We love Sega's hardware, but by EA using only MD games the consumer loses out on EA titles which were only released elsewhere, or we get inferior versions.

Also, what's up with only 14 games for £34.99? Note to EA, you might want to see what the rest of the industry is doing once in a while, or just take some maths lessons. Sega's *Mega Drive Compilation* has 32 games (try counting EA, that's more than double what you're releasing), and only costs £20, which is a full 15 pounds cheaper. Aren't numbers fun, EA? Good, now go away and come back when you've released a better compilation.



» *Polterguy* is one of the best games on the compilation, and is as good as we remember it,. But one game doesn't warrant £34.99!



» You can't see it here, but the compilation only supports 4:3 or 16:9 and not the original resolution. It shows the design team lacked even a basic understanding of retro games. Pure sacrilege!

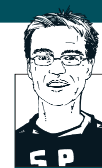


» The three *Road Rash* titles are all similar, but none are as good as the PSone or 3DO iterations. One UMD can hold up to 1.8 gig, which would have been ample.

IN SUMMARY

It could have been brilliant, sadly it doesn't even reach average.

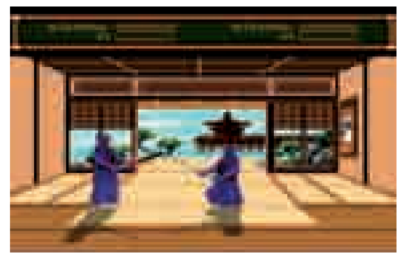
RATING **49%**



OPINION

In my younger days I loved EA's *Road Rash* and *M.U.L.E* so much I'd dress up in a leather leotard (like a biker) and ride around on mules all day – such was my joyous fanaticism! This compilation is so limited it does nothing for me nostalgically, and while games like *Polterguy* (which I'd never played before) are great, it just isn't worth £34.99.

Simon Phillips





» There's *Desert Strike* and *Jungle Strike*, but where's *Urban Strike*? They had three *Road Rash* games, so why not three *Strike* games?



OPINION

£35 for this? Sorry EA but that's just taking the proverbial. Sure, there are a couple of good games on here, most notably *Haunting Starring Polterguy*, but there certainly aren't enough triple A titles to justify the price. Until *EA Replay* drops to around £20, I'll stick with my original cartridges instead.

Ashley Day

THE KIWI RETURNS TO RESCUE HIS FRIENDS!



- **SYSTEM:** NDS
- **PRICE:** £24.99
- **RELEASED:** 24 FEBRUARY 2007
- **PUBLISHER:** RISING STAR GAMES
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4



Here in the Retro Gamer office we see a lot of remakes and updates, which always results in the same ale-fuelled debate: is it better or worse than the original and, most importantly, is it an update which adheres to the true spirit of the original? Companies will, of course, always try to revitalise past classics, and the nature of this art could be debated ad-nauseam, but it was with some trepidation that we loaded up *New Zealand Story Revolution*. How would we react?

The past bench mark for updates was Capcom with *Ghosts 'N Goblins* on the PSP (Issue 29), and, if I'm not being too bold, I'd say this comes tantalisingly close to topping it. It's more of a re-telling of the original, so veterans will instantly feel at home with the same surroundings and bosses – except everything's been remixed by someone who understands the original and knows what they were doing. This is a much more intense and challenging beast than before. There's also a 4-player versus mode.

The biggest additions though and, in my opinion the best, are the double-jump, limited flight ability and the capacity to fire at varying angles.

Purists may disagree, but trust us when we say that shooting enemies wherever they are makes for a fantastic addition. It really works incredibly well within the traditional dynamic. Not quite as good are the twin-screen gimmicks; it didn't need dual-screen extras and while many are brilliant, others severely detract from your immersion in the game. Things like fishing and walking the tightrope are bloody awesome, but others like *Spot The Difference* are truly dreadful.

We would have scored it higher, but the dual-screen gimmicks starkly contrast between marvellous and utterly stupid. These are thankfully brief, though, and don't seriously detract from the overall package. It's not often that review code arrives and management needs to remind you to take a lunch break – this has a serious one-more-go vibe to it, and regardless of whether you're a fan of the original or are a Tiki virgin, it's a classically styled title well worth considering.



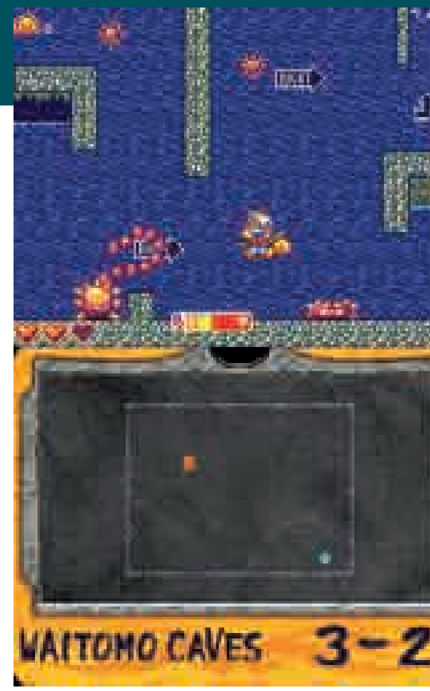
OPINION

Have you ever laid on your back naked and had kiwis run all over you like puppies? I haven't, but this game gives me that urge. It's wonderful and delightful, even if I do find myself perpetually stuck on a level, and having to rely on John to help me. It's very tough, but, hey, it works so splendiferously I honestly don't mind.

Darran jones



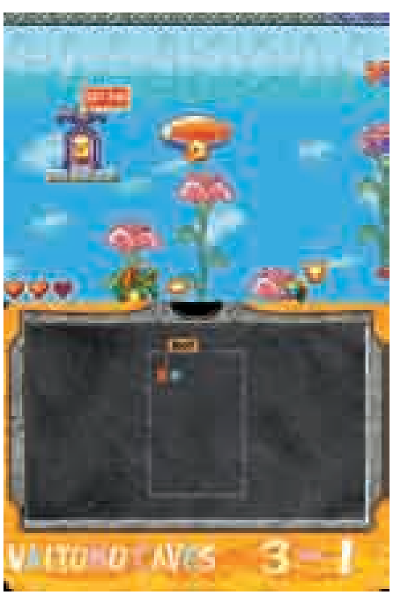
» We're not fans of the *Touch The Difference* idea. It's very jarring, quite difficult, and pulls you right out of the game.



» Look at his adorable little goggles. Everything about the game emanates a wonderful innocent charm. Brilliant.



» The bosses take on a whole new dimension with the two screens, and are very well implemented. Especially with the variable firing angle. Utter genius.



» It's a Kiwi… and he's in a Zeppelin! We bet if he were in a rock band, he'd call it Kiwi Zeppelin and play songs called Stairway To New Zealand.



» These tightrope walking sections are brilliant. Unfortunately many of the other dual-screen games are terrible.

IN SUMMARY

Whether you liked the original, or have never even heard of Tiki the Kiwi, this is a rather nifty game for your DS library. Smooth 2D visuals, great level design, clever gameplay mechanics, plus a good challenge, make this a great revisit of an old classic. A must for anyone who likes old fashioned games.

RATING 90%



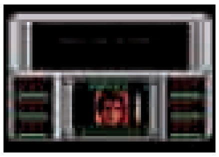
OPINION

I've never been able to get accustomed to 3D polygons, and I'm glad they went with sprites for this one, but I'm not quite as enamoured as Darran or John. Yes, it looks lovely and has some great additions, but it's very tough, the dual-screen elements feel forced and, if I'm being honest, it hasn't been updated enough for my liking. I was hankering for an entirely new scenario!

Simon Phillips

ALIENS

"IT'S COMING RIGHT AT US"



- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRIC DREAMS
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **GENRE:** ACTION
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** C64
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1+



HISTORY

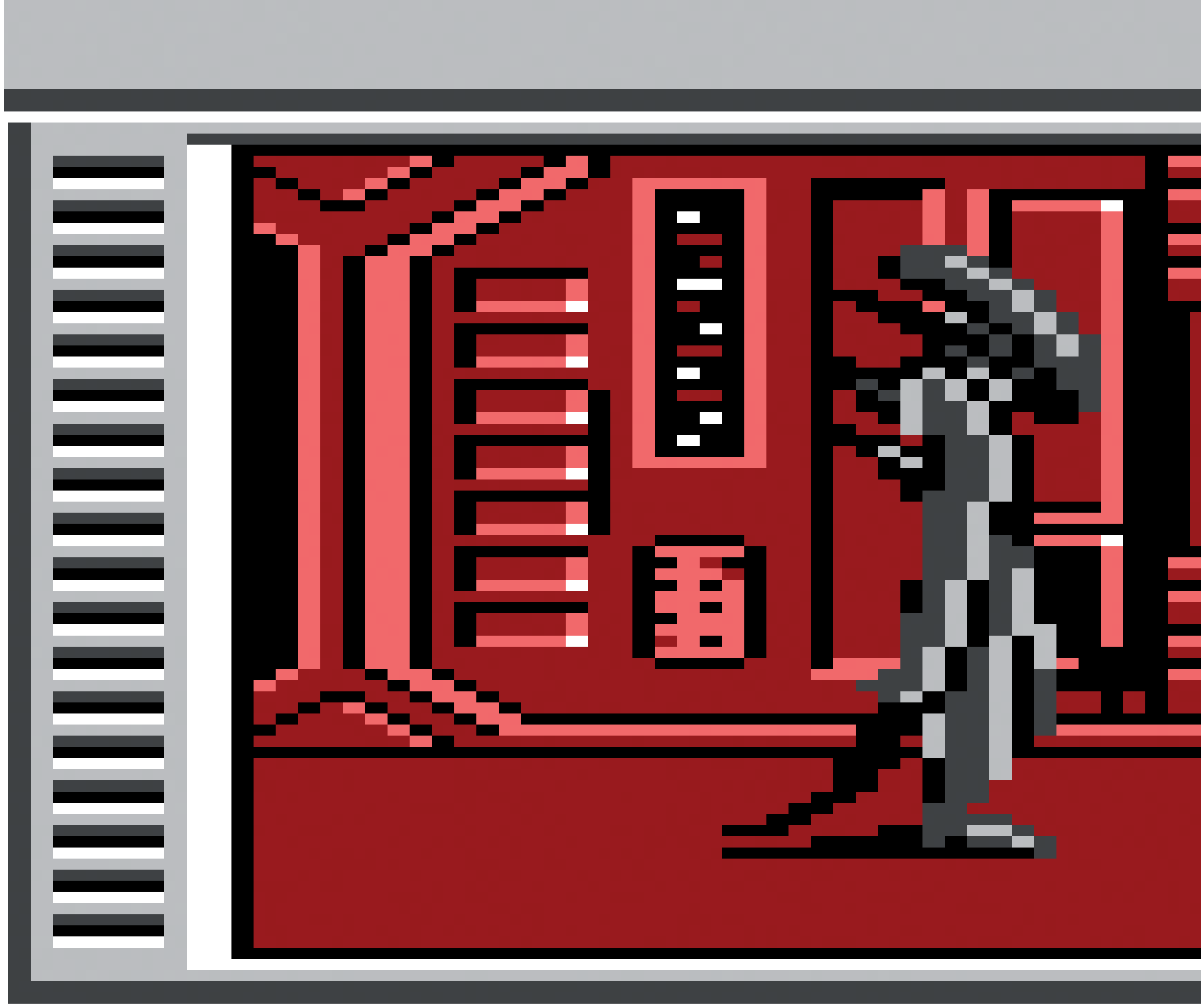
With today's cutting-edge aesthetics, it's hard to ever imagine that we could once get scared senseless by a humble 8-bit computer game. Nevertheless, Electric Dreams' wonderfully chilling adaptation of James Cameron's *Aliens* did just that – and how.

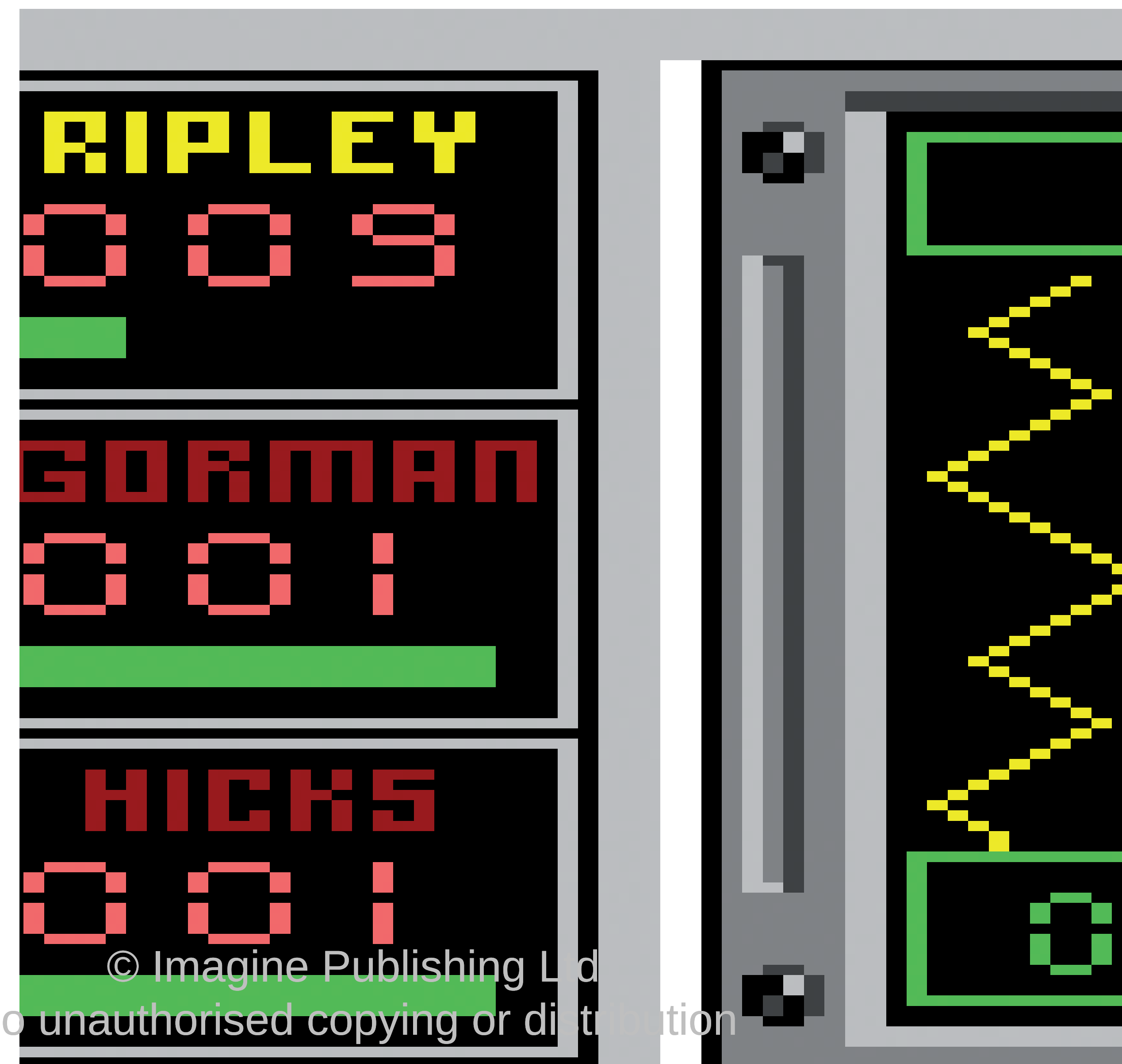
Alright, so the likes of *F.E.A.R.*, *Condemned* and the *Silent Hill* franchise have presented terror in a whole new, far more realistic way, but it's amazing to think that playing *Aliens* was so intense that there was a time when I couldn't even load it up, let alone play it, unless my bedroom lights were on.

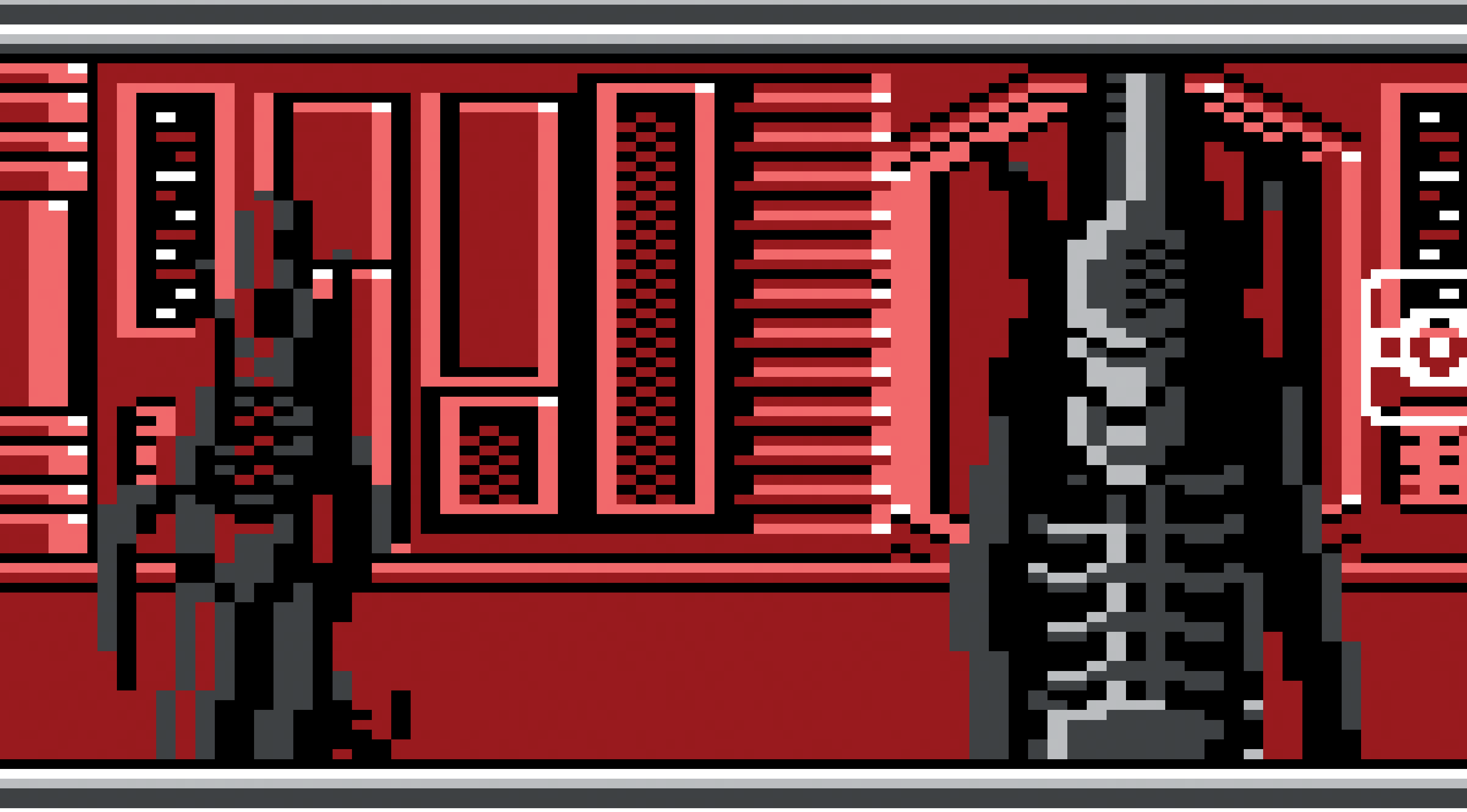
Despite being incredible basic to look at, *Aliens* dripped with atmosphere and was quite unlike any movie conversion of the time, and not just because it was so bloody good. The first-person view used in the game perfectly matched the moment in the film when the pumped-up marines start exploring the deserted base and, as the game progressed, it managed to capture all the terror and confusion of the movie in a way few other titles have managed.

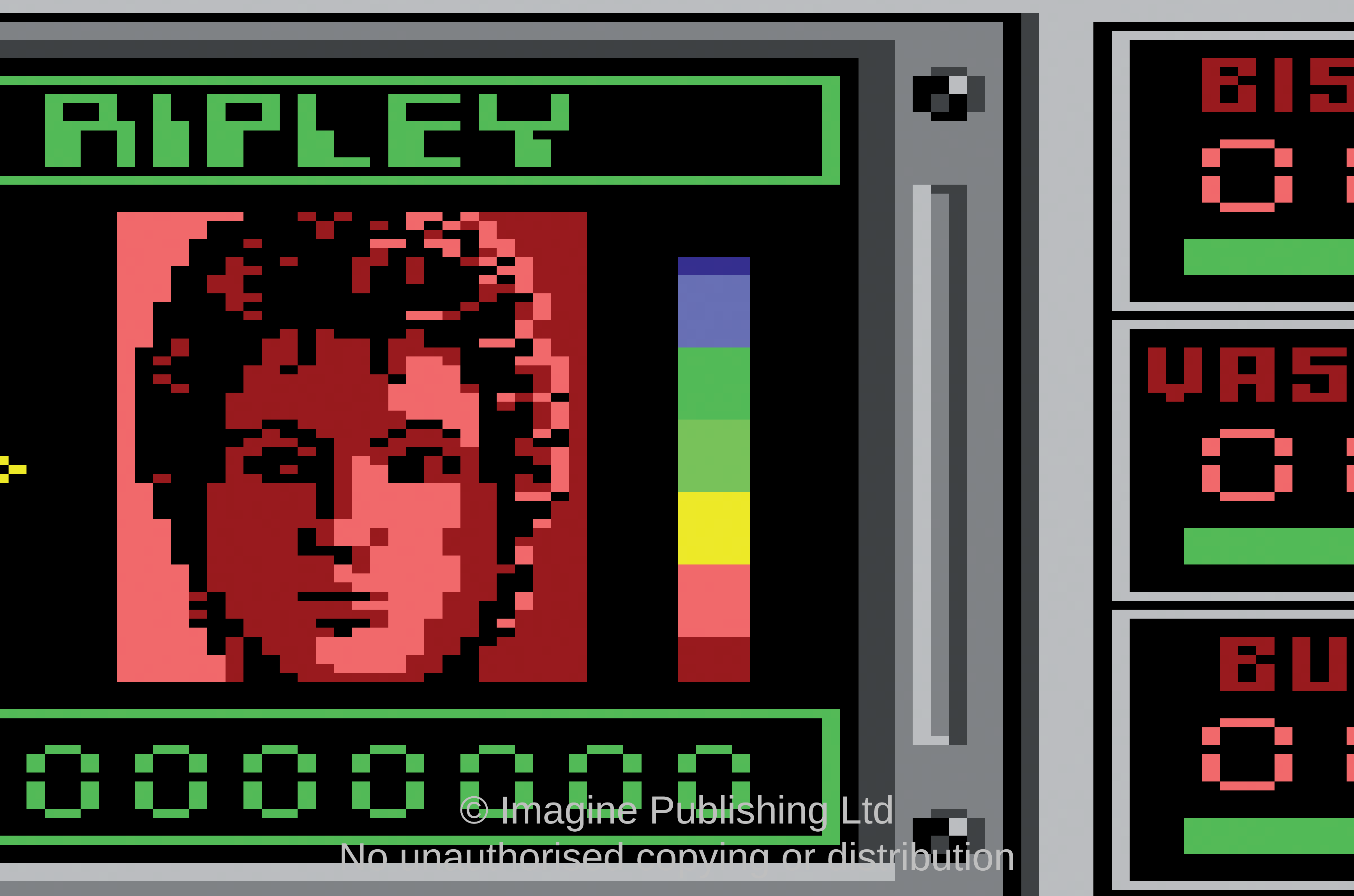
Taking control of one of six soldiers, including Ellen Ripley, your aim was to search the narrow corridors of the abandoned base to find out what happened to all its inhabitants. As you made your way through the claustrophobic rooms, your ears were treated to an incredibly eerie soundtrack – all jarring notes and jangling bleeps – that made the hairs on the back of your neck stand up; it made you wish you'd invited a friend to share the fear.

As scary as this initial exploration was, nothing could compare to when you finally tracked down one of your xenomorphic foes. A once slow beep from your scanner would continually rise in pitch and frequency as you drew ever closer to the alien nightmare. Take too long firing or, worse still, miss and the terrifying foe would rapidly move towards you, filling your ears with that painful alarm and your viewing screen with static. It may well be true that "In space no one can hear you scream", but when you're playing *Aliens* on your own it's quite a different matter…








RIPLEY
0000000
BIS
VAS
BU

BARGAIN HUNT

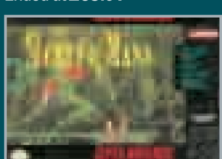
HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japan auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over 100 different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it!

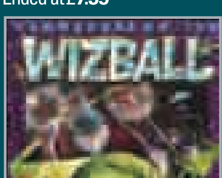
RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. If something has sold for a staggeringly high amount of money (or lower than it normally would) you'll find them listed here.

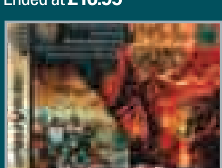
SECRET OF MANA
SNES
Normally Sells for **£30+**
Ended at **£63.01**



WIZBALL
COMMODORE 64
Normally sells for **£1**
Ended at **£7.35**



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS COLLECTION
SATURN
Normally sells for **£35+**
Ended at **£16.95**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45+ ($83 - $111)**

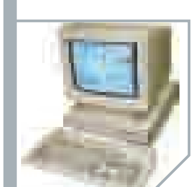


PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60 ($74 - $111)**

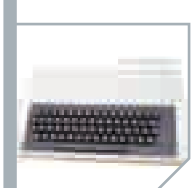


PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released!
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

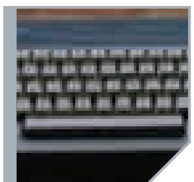
ACORN



ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (with games)**
Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).

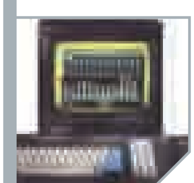


BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor!



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+ ($46+)**
Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- RENEGADE
- RICK DANGEROUS
- GRYZOR



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE

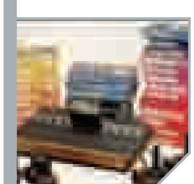


APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+) (with games)**
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built machine and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



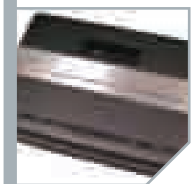
2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+**
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

- [5] ROCKING HORSE SHIT
- [4] HEN'S TEETH
- [3] LUCKY FIND
- [2] EBAY REGULAR
- [1] CAR BOOT SALE BARGAIN



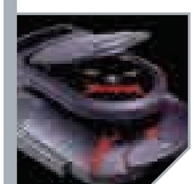
5200
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY [4]
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.
- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY [3]
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.
- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES



JAGUAR
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY [2]
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!
- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY [4]
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!
- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD

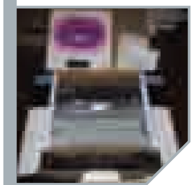


LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY [3]
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.
- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



ST
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY [2]
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) depending on model**
Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models of various specifications.
- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

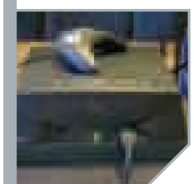
BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY [5]
» PRICE **£75+ ($138+) (prices fluctuate wildly)**
Ultra rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



PLAYDIA
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY [5]
» PRICE **£90 ($166) and upwards according to eBay**
Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.
- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



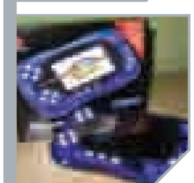
PIPPIN(ATMARK)
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY [5]
» PRICE **Approx £500+ ($921+)**
A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. It's high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.
- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



WONDERSWAN (B/W)
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY [3]
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



WONDERSWAN COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY [2]
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL
» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY [2]
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.
- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



AMIGA500/600/1200
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY [2]
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) (more with games, depending on model)**
Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore, that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models, with differing specs, the Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.
- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



C16/PLUS 4
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY [3]
» PRICE **£15+ ($28+)**
The less well known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.
- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY [1]
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
One of the best selling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.
- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY [4]
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.
- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND

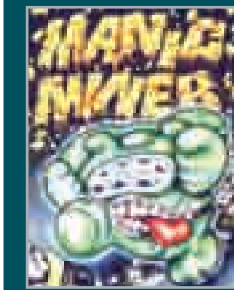


C128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY [3]
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.

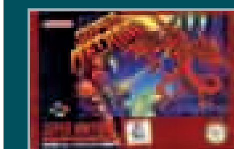


CDTV
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY [4]
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

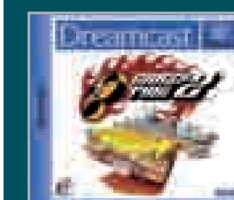
MANIC MINER
ZX SPECTRUM
Normally sells for **50 pence**
Ended at **£4.51**



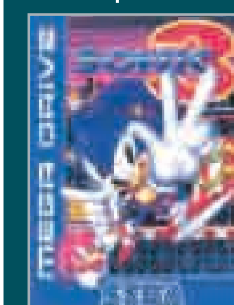
SUPER METROID
SNES
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£27.01**



CRAZY TAXI 2
DREAMCAST
Normally sells for **£10+**
Ended at **£3.75**



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **75 pence**



EYE OF THE BEHOLDER II
AMIGA
Normally sells for **£6+**
Ended at **£17.05**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.
- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) based on condition/extras**
The computer that established Commodore brand.
- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU



FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+)**
Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu.



FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+ ($368+)**
A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive, (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!
- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.
- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



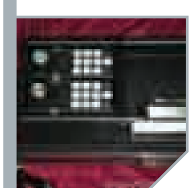
BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($18)**
Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…
– Tesco 12 Crumpets
– I Can't Believe It's Not Butter 500g
– Robertson's Raspberry Jam 340g



CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
More inanity from the land of the rising sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio hoped it would do better than their failed PV-1000 console released in 1983.



FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (from the USA)**
The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) standalone**
Coleco's third generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.
-CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15) (very cheap on eBay)**
Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.
- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Failed console by Emerson, which had numerous different clones released as well.
- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT KILLER



EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, which was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40+ ($74+) depending on extras**
Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.
- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act! Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



ORIC-1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
The Oric-1 was a highly underrated 8-bit bit home computer created by Oric Products Internation. Despite having many games that were arguably superior to those on the Spectrum it was sadly unable to compete with the rival machine's high sales.
- XENON1
- INSECT INSANITY
- RAT SPLAT



PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on condition/model**
Another attempt by Sony to enter the videogame hardware market (after the MSX), this time they took over the market. There are countless undocumented yet excellent PS games. Was later re-released as the PSOne, which is more expensive, but looks much nicer in design.
- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPE
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 ($92 - $368) (allegedly for a mint system)**
Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupe was a unique 8-bit British home computer which didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.
- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



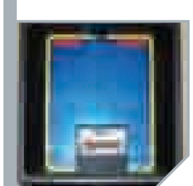
SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.



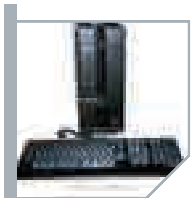
TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.
- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Series of old computers by Tomy.



VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.
- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE

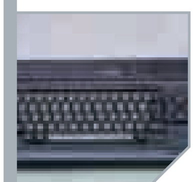


X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($166+)**
Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.
- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

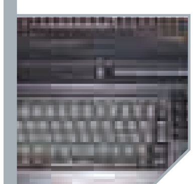
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent homebrew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER

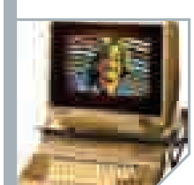


MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

NEC



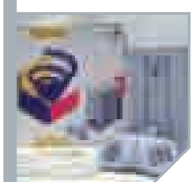
PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of cool Japanese games for it. Released in the US as the NEC Trek. Be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55 ($101)**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70+ ($129+)**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two system's Hu-Cards are not mutually compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) (massive fluctuations)**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- BLOODY WOLF
- NINJA SPIRIT



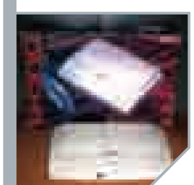
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147) (prices can fluctuate)**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had 6 games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PCE CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
CD-ROM add-on for the PCE and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PCE DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120 ($221)**
System that combines the PCE/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.

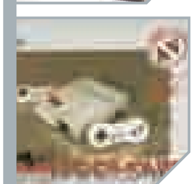


DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Stripped down white version of the PCE Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a 6 button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60 ($111)**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over a 1000 games to choose from!



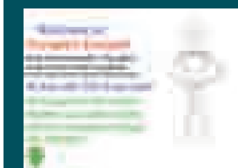
FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



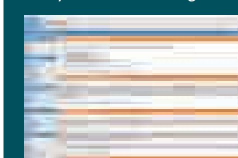
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned,

RETRO GAMING SITES

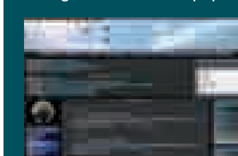
DUNGEON ESCAPE
Not a retro site as such, but *Dungeon Escape* is so much fun to play we had to give it a mention. Essentially a stickman version of *Dragon's Lair, Dungeon Escape* is an ingenious little game. Just make sure your mouse button is working…
www.studiohunty.com/dungeon/



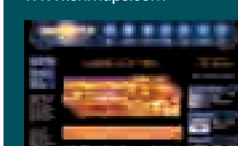
ATARI AGE
The superb Atari Age remains one of the best websites around dedicated to all things Atari. Every console it ever released is featured here and there are plenty of screenshots, reviews and box scans to keep you happy. A truly wonderful resource site that should be visited by everyone. www.atariage.com



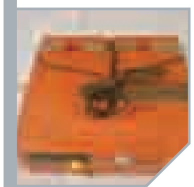
METAL SLUG DATABASE
The *Metal Slug* database is one of the most complete sites about the franchise that we've found and tells you everything you need to know. Filled with reviews, art, screenshots, this is the site for those with a love for cute metal tanks: www.mslugdb.com/indexen.php



SHMUPS.COM
The reason we constantly return to schmups.com is simple, it has one of the friendliest and informative forums that we've ever visited, therefore making it essential visiting for anyone that likes to blow shit up.
www.shmups.com



the drive belts break very easily.



SHARP FAMICOM TWIN
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp.
- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



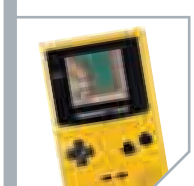
GAME&WATCH
» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1+ ($2+)**
Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yoko.



GAME BOY B/W
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($9)**
Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite it's age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15)**
A smaller and more compact GB, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.
- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12 ($22)**
Colour-based version of the classic GB. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.
- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



GAME BOY ADVANCE
» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**



N64
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Nintendo's last cartridge based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.
- SUPER MARIO 64
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



N64 DD
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of their cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.
- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72 pin based NES games work.
- METROID
- THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of their most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JPN)
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Cheaper and redesigned SNES.
- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.
- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



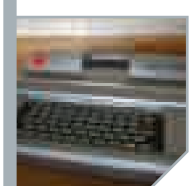
CD-I 205/210/220
» YEAR **from1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Unique system by Philips.The 200 series consists of front loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



CD-I 450/500
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (more with DVC)**
Consolised version of previous models, with the latter 500 series featuring an integrated DVC.
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
A successor to the G7000, that was backwards compatible.
- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



32X
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (with leads)**
Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance it's capabilities.
- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



DREAMCAST
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46) depending on extras**
Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.
- SHENMUE
- CRAZY TAXI
- REZ



GAME GEAR
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28) more with extras**
Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. Could also be used as a TV (as shown here).
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20-£50 ($37 - $$92)**
Sega's first console, and a piece of history! The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



SC-3000
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50 ($92)**
Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.



MASTER SYSTEM I/II
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) with leads etc.**
Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.
- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- CALIFORNIA GAMES



AMSTRAD MEGA PC
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (according to eBay)**
A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



TERADRIVE
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100 ($184)**
Another Mega Drive computer

hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



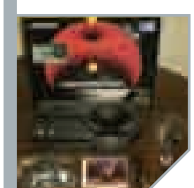
MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» » PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on model**
The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.



GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.
- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+) depending on system**
CDX/Xeye
A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+) depending on system**
Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.
- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD

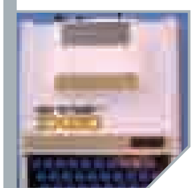


PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (more with games)**
Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook style boxes.
- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR. AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse, that despite an amazing catalogue of games never really took off.
- SATURN BOMBERMAN
- GUARDIAN HEROES
- DRAGON FORCE

SINCLAIR



ZX-80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 ($368) Apparently if boxed and mint**
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



ZX-81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) if mint**
Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX-80, but still commands a respectable price.
- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
-SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**



ZX SPECTRUM
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**

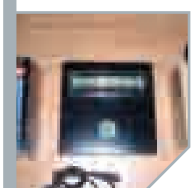


ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, it was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.
- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

SNK



NEOGEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
High powered home system by SNK. Features many high quality arcade games. Sadly, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



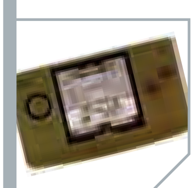
NEOGEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) (multi-slot systems cost more)**
High powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of NeoGeo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted).
- METAL SLUG
- KING OF FIGHTERS 96
- WAKU WAKU 7



NEOGEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184) varies**



NEOGEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80+ ($147+)**
CD-based NeoGeo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of NeoGeo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has slightly improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.
- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHOWDOWN RPG



NEOGEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



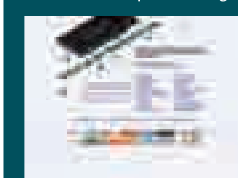
NEOGEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Handheld NeoGeo systems by SNK, that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.
- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

RETRO GAMING SITES

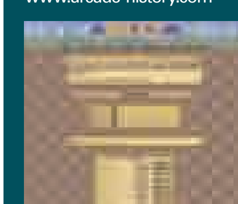
LEMON AMIGA
Lemon Amiga is the sister site to Lemon64 and it's dedicated to all things Amiga. As well as reader reviews, screenshots and interviews, you'll find a bustling forum that's full of enthusiastic Amiga fans that are more than willing to answer any questions you may have. An excellent and informative site that's a must visit for Amiga lovers. www.lemonamiga.com



WORLD OF SPECTRUM
We've mentioned World of Spectrum countless times in this particular column, but it's just so damned good, we're going to mention it again. We've been regularly visiting it for years now, and we've still not uncovered everything this vast site has to offer. Filled with reviews, archived magazines like Crash and Your Sinclair and even legal games, World of Spectrum is quite simply one of the best archives around. www.worldofspectrum.org



ARCADE HISTORY DATABASE
We've been scouring this site for months now, and like World of Spectrum, we're constantly finding brand new information. There are entries for literally hundreds of games, and pretty much every large arcade franchise is covered in excellent detail. Best of all is the detailed conversions list that tells you how many systems a game was actually converted to. www.arcade-history.com



Special thanks to **lofi-gaming-org.uk** who supplied several of our screenshots

RETRO SCENE

RETRO REMAKES COMPETITION WINNERS

DRUM ROLL PLEASE

RETRO REMAKES REVEALS THE WINNERS OF ITS 2006 REMAKE COMPETITION



» And the winner is…

The results are finally in for the Retro Remakes Competition 2006, and what a competition it turned out to be. A grand total of 76 games were entered, out of which four were disqualified and four scored below 10%. That leaves 68 cracking remakes all available for free.

Retro Gamer would like to congratulate this year's winner, Pug Ugly, who wowed judges with his remake of the 1983 Fantasy Software hit *The Pyramid*. The game sees the player trapped inside a pyramid; the only way to get out is through opening sealed doors by collecting gems from fallen enemies; the enemies come in the form of mummies and scarabs. Ridiculously catchy tunes sprinkle the shooter and it makes for a deserving winner and a fun-filled experience.

One of the judges, Ian Price, summed up *The Pyramid* saying "[it's] a brilliantly fun game that captures the true spirit of retro-gaming and updates it in a way that can be accessed by nearly everybody." Not to be outdone, Odd Bob demonstrated everyone's feeling towards the winning game by exclaiming "I'm truly thankful for someone coming out to prove that the fight isn't in vain and that now, there's this game… and it can be played by such a wide range of people that it just makes me grin from ear to ear. Pug Ugly, I salute you."

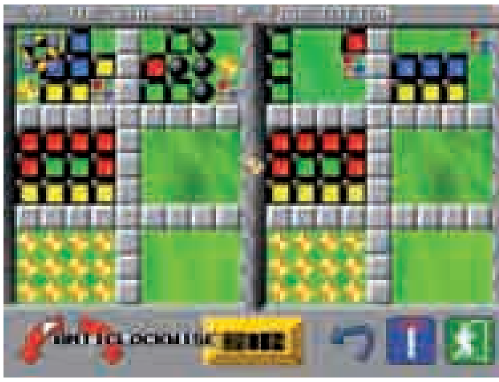
Finishing second was Craig Forrester's *Clockwiser*, proving that addictive puzzling has never been so much fun. Reminiscent of many Amiga and ST puzzle games it somehow betters them all and eats up more time than a very hungry Langolier.

Finally, in third place, was the Retro Gamer early favourite for this year's title, Adam Nightingale's remake of *Star Wars*. Oozing class it managed to whip up a storm amongst the judges, who with their best Jedi council robes and voices deliberated and battled furiously with each other to deliver the best *Star Wars* quotes in their summaries; Geekay just about won with his all-encompassing "Yahoo! That's one in a million kid!" We concur.

So that's it for another year. Our thanks go to everyone involved in the event: organisers and entrants. While we wait impatiently for next year's competition to come around, do make sure you visit http://retroremakes.com/comp2006/results.php to download not just the winners but any games that you fancy from this year's roster. It really is packed with the great and the good; there are a few in-jokes and ringers in the mix too, like Scottige's homage to *Deal Or No Deal* – there certainly is something in the box.



» The force was strong in this one.



» Never has a level been so aptly titled.



» Retro Gamer can't wait to get its hands on this piece of Retro Gaming greatness.

WILL THE SECOND ALTERN 8 COMPILATION PROVE TO BE BETTER THAN THE FIRST?

SECOND TIME LUCKY

As this month's Retro Gamer goes to press, news reaches us that Altern 8 are readying a sequel to one of the year's most contentious releases, last year's *Spectrum Allstars*.

The aptly named *Spectrum Allstars Volume 2* is set to deliver 50 classic games and, with titles such as *Back To Skool*, *Everyone's A Wally*, *Army Moves* and *Game Over*, the pedigree on offer is undeniable.

Altern 8 has a business model to be proud of where the people that made the game benefit directly from sales of their products through a royalty-styled system, and it's something that's proved very popular.

If Altern 8 can remedy the teething problems with the interface that caused some consternation with the first release, this could well be a must-have purchase and could prove a fine way to start 2007. Keep an eye on future issues of Retro Gamer for the definitive review, providing we get sent a copy, of course.

RETURN OF THE MAX

THE NEXT SAM & MAX CHAPTER IS ON THE WAY





After the rather recent success of *Sam And Max Episode 1: Culture Shock*, Telltale games has once more offered up a treat for retro fans by announcing a release date for *Episode 2*. Subtitled *Situation Comedy*, the subscription download specialist has announced that the anticipated launch date will be 05 January 2007.

Following on from the duo's exploits in *Sam And Max: Culture Shock*, the crazy pair's next outing is set to feature all the madcap antics and deadpan humour that made *Culture Shock* such a riot to play through. As with *Culture Shock*, the lovable duo are joined once again by Bosco, Cybil and Jimmy, as they try to find out why talk show host Myra Stamp has gone mad and is holding her audience hostage. As always with Sam and Max, though, knowing the case is only half the battle – solving it is something else entirely. Before they can get to the stage where Myra is holding her prisoners, they first have to prove worthy of 15 minutes of fame. Telltale has demonstrated once and for all that new business models can work. Such has been the success of *Sam And Max Episode 1: Culture Shock*, George Lucas may well be looking on with covetous eyes. No news yet on other titles, but it can only be a matter of time before more are announced.

Be sure to watch this one closely, as *Sam And Max* has certainly hit the road running and we're sure that the best is yet to come. Have a look at the trailers at www.telltalegames.com for more information. Now if only Grim Fandango was to receive a reprieve from the 'Where Are They Now' shelf…

» **Left:** Sam makes a new friend. **Right:** There is plenty here to keep fans of the series going.

THANKYOU FOR THE MUSIC

UBISOFT GIVES AWAY AN EXCLUSIVE NEW SOUNDTRACK AT VIDEO GAMES LIVE

Ubisoft surprised everyone this month with an act of great benevolence. At the recent Video Games Live show, which took place at the Hammersmith Apollo in London, Ubisoft representatives handed out free music CDs to the first 3000 people in the audience.

Featuring tracks from *Myst*, *Exile* and *Beyond Good And Evil*, the CD is balanced with more contemporary tracks from *Rainbow Six Las Vegas* and the forthcoming *Red Steel*, creating a package that chronicles the audio development of the French giant, from the early 8-bit days of videogames through to today. "Music is an important part of the gaming experience, and something Ubisoft takes very seriously" revealed Jon Rosenblatt, Ubisoft's UK Marketing Director, "with this in mind, we're thrilled to be involved in an event like Video Games Live, which recognizes the importance of this creativity." Tommy Tallarico, the co-creator and head of Video Games Live was also surprised at the generosity on display. "It's great to have an amazing publisher like Ubisoft onboard. We created Video Games Live not only to celebrate the industry for gamers, but also to show non-gamers how far the industry has come, and that videogames should be taken seriously as an art form."

The now traditional pre-concert meet-and-greet allowed concert-goers to speak to such industry luminaries as Richard Jacques, Nathan Mcree and David Whittaker, amongst many others, creating a rare opportunity for fans and musicians alike to share their thoughts on over 30 years of games music.

While on the topic of Video Games Live, after the success of the first UK show organisers have promised to return to the UK in the New Year. Keep an eye on www.videogameslive.com for more information.



» Video Games Live is just that, visually and aurally stimulating.

RETRO SCENE

TWIN KINGDOM VALLEY GETS A NEW LEASE OF LIFE ON MOBILE PHONES; WE SPEAK TO THE CREATOR OF THE ORIGINAL

TWIN KINGDOM VALLEY

A WHOLE WORLD IN YOUR MOBILE

- **FORMAT:** MOST MOBILE PHONES
- **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- **DEVELOPED BY:** SILICON MAGIC
- **LINK:** WWW.TWINKINGDOMVALLEY.COM
- **PRICE:** £3.75
- **REVIEWED BY:** PAUL DRURY



» *Twin Kingdom Valley* as it appeared on the C64



» The adventure begins… it's like you're twelve again listening to Queen.

GET FLINT. LIGHT LAMP. DOWN. For gamers of a certain age, such terse commands should stir poignant memories of a lost gaming genre. Yes, *Twin Kingdom Valley* has pictures – wonderful miniaturised recreations of the graphics that graced the game when it first appeared on the BBC Micro, C64, Spectrum and other 8-bits back in the early eighties – but at its heart, it's a text adventure. And a few minutes with this lovingly-crafted and incredibly accurate conversion should convince young and old how perfectly suited this style of game is for mobile phones.

With a few thumb presses, you'll be exploring lush forests, stumbling along underground passageways and plundering treasure-filled castles. The developer has taken great care to make everything as painless and intuitive as possible. There's a superb predictive text system and an instant save game option, meaning any gap in your day becomes an opportunity to slip away and lose yourself in the Valley.

And you will get lost. *Twin Kingdom Valley* was a giant in its day and, with over 200 locations, map-making (another lost art?) is essential. The taxing puzzles and the cast of marauding creatures – who can move, fight and steal independent of your actions – ensure that this remains a challenge. This is a sophisticated, vibrant virtual world, rendered in the most advanced of all graphics engines: your imagination.

For old hands, this is like stepping back into your childhood. New adventurers may feel understandably daunted, but after their first successful escape from the Forest King's labyrinth, followed by a daring raid on the Desert King's fortress, they too should succumb to the joy of text.

So, sling your trusty holdall over your shoulder, drink deep from the magical waters and open your eyes to an ancient quest, beautifully reborn.

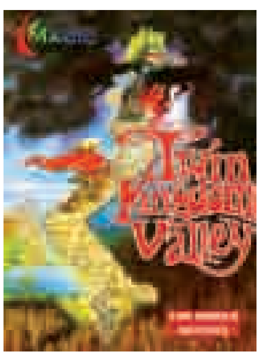
RATING: **95%**



» Let's see how strong that elf is after his third pint…

INTO THE VALLEY

ORIGINAL AUTHOR AND NEW DEVELOPER TELL OF THEIR SHARED QUEST



» A virtual box for the virtual valley.



» Excellent, a mace. Bring it on, castle guards.

"Picture this," begins Trevor Hall, recalling the creation of *Twin Kingdom Valley*. "A bunch of new graduates, who somehow had managed to play bits of the original text adventure on the computer science department's mainframe, hungry to play such games on the micro computers we could barely afford. Unemployed lads, sitting in a rented council flat in Manchester, making notes on scraps of green paper. These games seemed to have various mythical creatures, so I guessed they all could be variations of a general creature, as could "You". And off I went, designing from the bottom up…"

The result was an epic adventure, pioneering the concept of 'Non-Player Characters' whom you could befriend and command. The game contained a complex combat system and a custom-written graphics language to illustrate the game's many locations. Released in 1983 by Bug Byte, the title's success led to Trevor joining the Liverpool-based company for a while, until he concluded they were "truly a rotten outfit" and moved to the States, leaving the games industry behind.

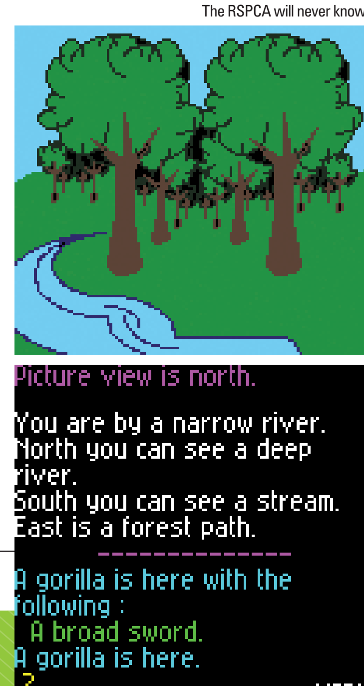
Thus he was rather surprised to be contacted earlier this year by one Ian Pare. "I wanted to do a phone game you could play for a long or short time, put down and then come back to it where you left off," explains Ian. "An adventure seemed to fit the bill. *TKV* had always stuck in my mind, partly because it was the first text adventure I'd played, but also because of what an amazing technical achievement it was. The game was huge and the other characters gave it an extra dimension that didn't exist in other games of the time. They really did roam the game world, just like you."

With no access to the source code, Ian dug out his trusty copy of Rodnay Zacks' 'Programming The 6502' and reverse-engineered the *TKV* binary code. The considerable challenge was made a little easier when he tracked down Trevor, now living in California. Impressed with Ian's efforts, the original author helped with debugging, updated the graphics editor and even provided new images, locations and puzzles.

"It was like having a part in the movie *Ghost*," quips Trevor. "You thought it was dead, but it's still around, and needs help moving to a new plane of existence."

For more on its second life, go to www.twinkingdomvalley.com where you can download the game for a multitude of mobiles and even chat to Trevor and Ian on the forums.

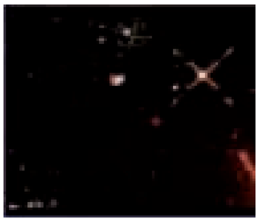
» Go on, HIT GORILLA WITH SWORD. The RSPCA will never know.



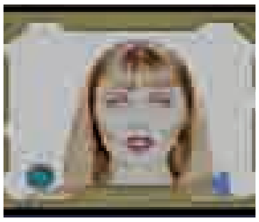
STAR STRIKE INVITES YOU TO PLAY A LITTLE AND WATCH A LOT – MIKE TOOLEY IS NOT IMPRESSED

STAR STRIKE

FANCY HAVING JACK THE RIPPER ROUND FOR TEA?



- » **FORMAT:** MEGA CD
- » **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** STARGATE GAMES
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** GOOD DEAL GAMES WWW.GOODDEALGAMES.COM
- » **PRICE:** £15.00 NTSC £17.50 PAL
- » **REVIEWED BY:** MIKE TOOLEY



» Sattelite Navigation has come a long way in *Star Strike*. Deluxe on-board computer shown here.

***Star Strike* is a difficult game to review. Difficult because it challenges the foundations that Retro Gaming is built on.** Difficult because it stands tall and proud in a flawed genre that had little consequence to the games of its time or today – a genre that past all but the smallest minority by. A genre that was about technical excellence and what might be achieved with the hardware at hand. A genre that tried and failed to change the way we play games. This release isn't like catching up with an old friend, it's like Jack the Ripper coming to tea: you don't like him but you have so many questions that you sit there being polite, hoping to learn something that you didn't know. After ten minutes though you realise that you already have all the information you could ever want and can't wait for him to leave so you can reassign him back into the 'unfortunate things in history' scrapbook. With Sony's backing, *Star Strike* was the sci-fi game that would redefine videogames, but, like so many MCD games of the time, *Star Strike* never saw a commercial release.

Lost to gamers and with a gestation period that lasted over a decade, *Star Strike* has been whispered across internet forums for years as one of the Mega CD's worst-kept secrets. Now Good Deal Games has brought it home, to the system it was always intended for.

Continuing the lineage set out by games like *Night Trap* and *Sewer Shark*, *Star Strike* is a full motion video utopia. A space opera aspiring to be *Wing Commander*, *Star Strike* mimics the sci-fi of the day (such as Babylon *5* and *Lexx*).



» Even Master Chief had to start somewhere.

The game sets the player against the attacking Protoids, who are intent on devouring the universe. The background information on the Protoids depicts them as a Borg like race, destroying and then assimilating worlds and races. Protoids have a penchant for ingesting brains and taking on the knowledge contained therein.

The game starts with a long intro, showing a small strike team returning from a skirmish – massive losses have been suffered, but, worse still, The Orange Wing Centre has been stolen. If the Protoids ingest The Orange Wing Centre they will have all the battle plans mankind has in place for its ultimate survival.

Enter stage left the new recruit; just out of flight school this is the player's first post.

The game itself plays out between lengthy cutscenes; controlling a cursor on the HUD display, the player does one of two things. By pressing A over the highlighted action-icons, an event is triggered, like launching the space craft that you are flying; secondly the player takes control of a target reticule, which allows the targeting of enemy ships, asteroids and other space hazards and are dispatched with a deft press of the A button.

The atmosphere the game creates is great, the full motion video is strong and, although still firmly routed in the B movies, when it comes to acting and plot the game plods along nicely.

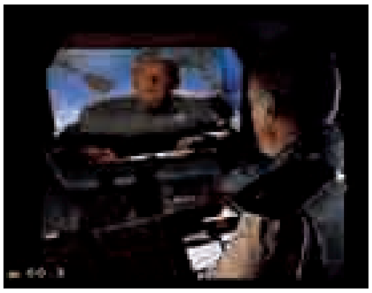


» Although it looks impressive you will see this cutscene each time you get a direct hit.

That wasn't so difficult was it? Ah, but this is the tough bit. Playing the game brings little reward and the player eventually finds themself wishing they could sit back and watch rather than having to take part. Initially pulled into the plot by the splendid visuals the games mechanics soon start to torment the player. One example of this is when your craft is thrown headlong into asteroids; over 20 appear on screen and all are highlighted, but you need only destroy one to pass; you have no idea which one, so you fire the laser triggering a cutscene of a laser firing, followed by a cutscene of an explosion – then back to the game, then repeat. There are at least 7 seconds between firing a shot and returning to the game screen.

Any game that disengages the gamer so frequently isn't really a game and that's why this review is so difficult. In its day our love of technology would have ensured success for *Star Strike*; today it is an expensive curio and a reminder to us all to be careful what we wish for.

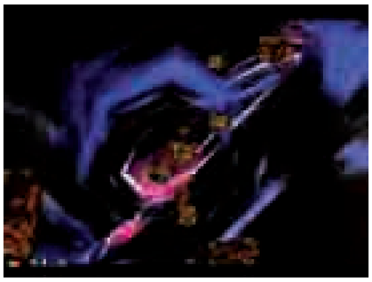
RATING **58%**



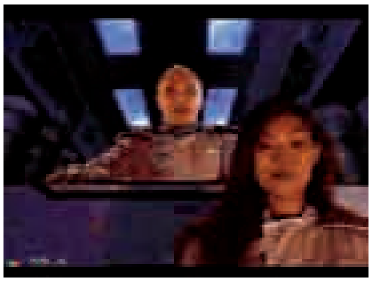
» The story is well orchestrated. We can't help wondering if *Star Strike* the movie may have been the better way to go.



» Light-speed: the only speed worth travelling at in the future.



» Here is the asteroid belt that needs navigating each time the player takes off.



» Fortunately, you do occasionally get to do some playing. Not here though.

EVERY MONTH WE LOOK AT OUR FAVOURITE REMAKES; THIS MONTH IT'S DEMON ATTACK AND GHOSTBUSTERS

Remake of the Month

DEMON ATTACK

A GREAT GAME GETS ONE HELL OF A REMAKE



- **FORMAT:** PC WINDOWS
- **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- **DEVELOPED BY:** HAROLD THIJSSEN
- **LINK:** WWW.REMAKES.ORG/COMP2006/SCREENSHOTS.PHP?PAGE=3
- **PRICE:** FREE
- **REVIEWED BY:** MIKE TOOLEY
- **POSITION IN RETRO REMAKES COMPETITION:** 10/76

On loading Harold Thijssen's *Demon Attack* it's pretty evident that this remake is a real labour of love. *Demon Attack* in its original VCS form generated some notoriety from its challenge, which saw the player having to tackle demons, bombs, lasers and the standard Atari joystick. Thijssen has remedied this by making the game fully customisable and has redefined the keys, allowed for play with a mouse, or even a trackball. In fact, you can play it however you want to. It doesn't end there though, as you can speed the game up, slow it down or even turn the bombs and lasers on and off. You can make *Demon Attack* what you want it to be – the entry level is wherever you want to put the 'Way In' sign.

The game itself is fairly simple in terms of looks. The player's ship moves across a city silhouette left to right, firing up at the demons as they swarm in waves. Different waves of demons bring different attack patterns, with some demons dividing into two, diverting the player's attention away from the more nefarious demons with lasers and bombs, and they just keep coming and coming.

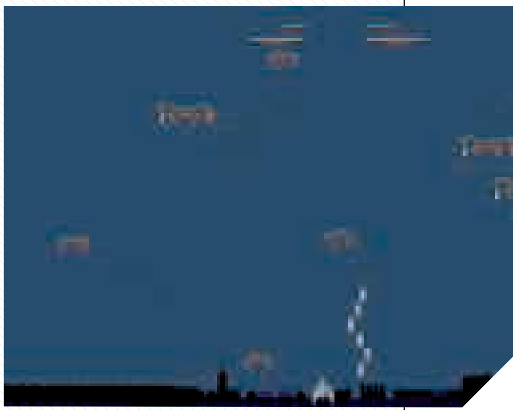
Smooth, sharp and effective visuals entrance the player as the demons dance indiscriminately across the screen. Some nice motion-tracking effects create a haze around the playfield, whilst explosions bolt like lightning from the screen. Sound effects crash in and around the player and the game space becomes more and more cluttered as the pace increases; behind the chaos sits a pulsing, chugging music track that is almost lost amongst the game's energy. The game is tireless and timeless; download it now and we can guarantee that you will never be without it again.

Demon Attack VCS was a great game. *Demon Attack*, the remake, goes beyond being a great game: it shows exactly what a remake can be, giving the player the opportunity to tailor the game to their own preferences, to put right the wrongs of the original and, furthermore, to add relevance and credence to an age of games that few people remember and fewer can understand. Fear not the lowly placing in the Retro Remakes competition, gamers and games creators have seldom agreed on what makes a good game; just ask Sega if you doubt that.

RATING **82%**



» Still shots don't do the visuals justice.



» Getting frantic, there is so much going on even though it's a simple game.

GHOSTBUSTERS

WHO YOU GONNA CALL... SMILA AND SCOTTIGE?

- **FORMAT:** WINDOWS
- **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- **WRITTEN BY:** SMILA AND SCOTTIGE
- **LINK:** HTTP://WWW.SCOTTIGE.CO.UK/FORUM/INDEX.PHP?BOARD=2.0
- **REVIEWED BY:** MIKE TOOLEY
- **POSITION IN RETRO REMAKES COMPETITION:** 10/76

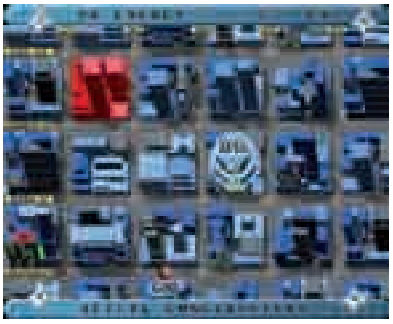


» Busting makes me feel good, da dud a du.

Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis' *Ghostbusters* had few peers upon release back in 1984. Thanks to a tempest of special effects and humour, *Ghostbusters* spawned more catch phrases and one-liners than a *Simpsons* boxset. Then David Crane somehow managed to shoehorn all of this into a humble 8-bit licence, retaining all the verve and gusto of the movie, while teaching our micros to speak. It was quite a feat. Little wonder then that *Ghostbusters* was one of the most successful movie licences to date.

Smila and Scottige have taken on a masterpiece of invention and somehow bettered it.

As the game loads it becomes apparent that Ray Parker Junior's copyright lawyers are still watching, so we are treated to Xentrix's cover of the *Ghostbusters* theme; in itself this is a triumphant piece of nostalgia for those who remember it and a remarkable discovery for those who don't – as is the neat front page awaiting the player. Swap the keys, set the difficulty level and that's it, you're launched into the game.



» The map in all its glory.

Like Crane's original game, you initially start off with $10000 to buy a vehicle and assorted Ghostbusting paraphernalia, such as traps and boxes. The main game stretches across a top-down map of New York – players move the Ghostbusters avatar to the buildings that are affected by ghosts (flashing red). Once at the building a short drive across the block allows players to pick up extra cash. Don't crash though, as it will cost a fortune!

On arrival it's time to bust some ghosts. Following the structure of the movie, the player takes control of two Ghostbusters, placing a trap between them to lure the ghost. Careful timing of the trap is needed as wasted traps cost you money. Captured ghosts, however, equate to more money and even better equipment and, as the game progresses, the ghosts become harder and harder to catch.

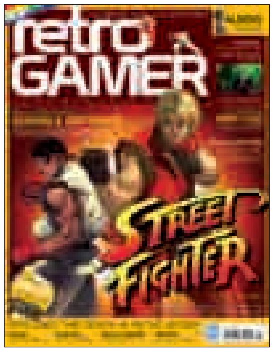
This pattern is repeated time after time; catching ghosts keeps the city's PK energy low; however, if the player is too slow the PK level rises and the Marshmallow man will show his stay-puff face – realised here, it must be said, with incredible panache.

With simple mechanics, bright and polished visuals that transcribe the delight of the gameplay, bolstered by being aurally authentic, this is one of the best remakes we've seen in recent years. Now, if this pair would just turn their hands to remaking the movie, the world would be a considerably happier place.

RATING **85%**

THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



CONTACT US

Snail Mail
Retro Gamer
Imagine Publishing
Richmond House
33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth
Dorset
BH2 6EZ

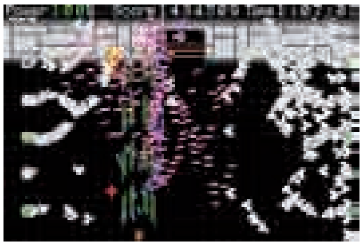
Email
retrogamer@
imagine-publishing.co.uk

STAR LETTER!

MORE INDIE COVERAGE!

Dear Retro Gamer,
Over the past couple of months I have been fortunate enough to be able to get your magazine here in America. It has very quickly become one of my favourite magazines of all time and I eagerly wait every month for my local book store to get their shipment. I just wanted to let you guys know how important you are. I read your magazine every month and I love it. Why? You may ask, obviously baulking at the expected "your magazine looks so cool" or "you guys are all hot!" No, though all are true on some level. I just find something insightful in your writing. It is smart, funny, and most of all passionate.





» *Vulkanon* by Takayama Fumihiko is an awesome doujin bullet-hell shmup, well worth emulating or putting on a flash cart.

Here is where I find you guys important. As we progress into the future of videogames something strange is coming to the surface. In my mind I feel that something is wrong. I don't know if it is just me, but I feel that something is missing in this "next wave of entertainment". Where is the quick fun? And that is why you are so important. No one has really realized that yet, but you guys are on the forefront of what may be the other "unseen" half of the future of gaming. I have been extremely impressed at your mention of independent games. An amazing source of quality titles that very few publications have the nerve to cite, they are some of the few groups of developers that care about quality and entertainment over the almighty dollar. Independent games hold on to what they want to – it's a world where anything goes: a breeding ground for creativity. I would absolutely love for you to feature an up-and-coming GBA indie developer by the name of Takayama Fumihiko at http://gba.pqrs.org/. Not only is he immensely talented, he is also one of the most down to earth and nicest people I have met.
Thank you for existing,
C Komisarz



» If you like indie coverage, we've got an awesome *Cave Story* feature coming up soon.

At last! We've been waiting for someone to comment on our coverage of indie and doujin games. So thank you for your support. We're pleased to know that there are people out there taking notice of and paying attention to the indie scene, as it features some truly fascinating games that often go unseen by the general public. It is indeed the "unseen" half of the future of gaming. You're right, few, if any magazines, show an interest in the scene and, actually, we'd love to give the subject more coverage than we already do. Sadly, though, this is a niche part of an already niche hobby, so we do have to keep the majority of our readers happy.

Japan's bi-annual Comiket convention is something we'd like to cover, along with the many cool releases mentioned daily on www.tigsource.com (check them out, they're awesome), but we honestly don't have the space. Thanks for pointing out Fumihiko's game, we'd love to give it a mention! It's actually a bloody awesome and hyper intense bullet-hell shmup, classically retro and freely available for the GBA. If you're an indie or doujin developer, working on an avant-garde or classically-styled title, then please contact us for coverage and we'll do our best to include it. We love the scene and are eager to support it.

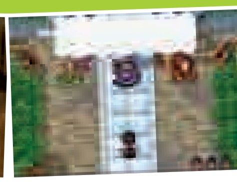
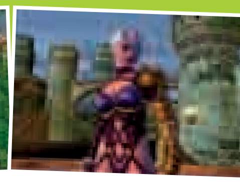


EVERY MONTH ONE lucky reader will receive an extremely trendy Retro Gamer T-Shirt (thankfully, not one worn by Darran) and a Sega Mega Drive Plug 'N Play pack. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls; failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

SCHIEDAM GAMES

Hi Retro Gamer,
I just want to tell you about the Bi-Annual retro game gathering in Schiedam. The city of Schiedam is famous for its gin. In the old days, the smell of distilled liquor filled the streets. In more recent days, it is one of the centres of Dutch retrogaming. Every half year Dutch retrogamers assemble to enjoy old games and to find new discoveries. I went on 26 November and found quite a few bargains, but was more impressed by the new games that were presented there. Every year some new retro games are shown to the public for the first time. Revival studios presented its new Vectrex game, *Colorclash*. Bas Kleijkerboom made a new game for the Philips Videopac/Odyssey 2, *Spiderman*. You can find more information on www.retrocomputerdag.nl.
Cheers,
Rick

The very idea of distilled liquor fills the Retro Gamer team with warm feelings of joy and nostalgia – Schiedam sounds like our kind of city! Otherwise thanks for the report, Rick, we appreciate it. It's not possible for us to attend every single



convention or event in the Retro Calendar, and so we appreciate it when readers write in to speak of what's happening. We like to think there's a strong two-way communication between the readers and the RG team, so by all means write in to let us know what you've seen or what you're getting up to.



» Did anyone else attend the convention in Schiedam city? More importantly, does it still smell wonderfully of gin?

AIRSTRIP ONE

Dear Darran and crew,
The latest edition of your outstanding magazine landed in my box today and I have to say the cover is stunning! I can't wait to devour the contents one glorious page at a time. *sigh* It does not get much better than this.

After giving so selflessly to your readers for so long, I thought it was time you got a something back. Unfortunately, the enclosed DVDs are not much to scream about, but will hopefully be of interest to you fellas. Being always on the lookout for anything retro games related, I wanted to share these two films with you. *Cloak & Dagger* and *Electric Dreams* are two cinematic examples both from the blessed Eighties, which have elevated my blood pressure and caused me to drift off dreamily into fond thoughts of bygone days when one could walk into any number of retail outlets and find the kinds of displays that you see in some scenes from these films.

While watching *Cloak & Dagger*, which is based on a never released Atari 5200 game, and seeing videogame merchandise in the gaming store featured in the film, a memory came alive of me as a child growing up. Anyway, I hope you enjoy the retro gaming flavour of the DVDs. Keep up the good work; your magazine brings untold enjoyment to me and I love it.
Best Wishes,
Steve R

Thank you so much for your kindness. The truth is, videogame journalism is not

FROM THE FORUM

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE ASKING A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTING THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE WANTED TO KNOW: WHICH HOME PORTS WERE BETTER THAN THE ARCADE ORIGINALS?

Sabreman
Radiant Silvergun, for the addition of Saturn Mode. I think the word to describe it would be 'Epic'.

Opa-Opa
Virtua Racing on the Mega Drive, because I didn't have to keep feeding it 50 pence pieces.

SirClive
Bomb Jack on the Spectrum was as close to perfection as you are going to get on an a vastly underpowered machine. It was like doing the grand prix circuit at Monaco in a Morris Minor and winning!

monkey puzzle
I think lots of games have better home versions because you actually have to get good at the game to complete it rather that just throw loads of coins in the slot. My favourites, though, have to be *Ikari Warriors* and *Michael Jackson's Moonwalker*.

forestville
Street Fighter II (on the SNES, ntsc 60Hz version) because the graphics where the same but you didn't have to keep feeding it coins and if you had the SNES joyboard it was a true arcade experience in your own home.

felgekarp
Renegade on the Spectrum – infinitely more playable than its arcade parent.

Mayhem
Buggy Boy for C64. How can I compare, I hear you scream, when the game isn't available in MAME? Simple, I was able to play it a few times one summer in the arcades and then compare it to the conversion. And the conversion was better – a lot more playable!

Smurph
The humble Master System version of *Rastan* I found to be vastly more fun than the arcade; it wasn't prohibitively hard, so I finished it, and I thought the music was better too – no mean feat from the Master System's weak sound chip. *Street Fighter II Turbo* for the SNES: an amazing conversion. I could play it seated, on ten star speed with the code, on pads that were perfect for that game, with more or less arcade perfect graphics. Shame it cost, like, £439 or something to import.

Ash
Kiki Kai Kai on the SNES! That was the first version I played, so I was shocked just how much better it was when I recently played the original on *Taito Legends*.

Duddyroar
Soul Cailbur on the Dreamcast. The arcade version was based on PlayStation technology, and Namco re-coded the game to take advantage of Sega's more powerful hardware. It was amazing to play a game at home that looked better than the arcade original! Happy days. It's a shame that Namco treated the Dreamcast like a dodgy relative for the rest of its life.

Randall Flagg
Robocop on the Amiga. As well as being a pretty good conversion, you also got a handful of extra mini-games thrown into the mix making it the ultimate version. *Tekken 2* on the PSX, as you had the hilarious Big Head mode as well as the first-person perspective mode which added a completely new dimension to the game.

DonkeySpank
Paperboy on the Speccy. The perfectly pitched learning curve, coupled with the ability to replay without shelling out a gazillion 50p pieces, helped the Speccy port stand head and shoulders above its overbaked arcade counterpart. And the loss of that impossibly hard "handlebar" controller is a gift – finally we can master that ker-razy BMX!

BennyTheGreek
Enduro Racer on the Speccy… because you could play it in just your underpants without getting strange looks and/or arrested.

batman877
One that stands out for me has to be *Time Crisis* on the PSone. The home setup, whilst not as good graphically, was just as playable, with more options and better game modes. *Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts* on the SNES is also worth a mention (but I guess that was more of a remake than a conversion).

THE RETRO FORUM



» Crikey, do you remember when all games stores looked like this? Ahh, those were happy days (sniff).



» This scene from the film was actually made using the arcade version of *Cloak & Dagger*.

as glamorous as many people think, so it's always nice when you're praised for going that extra mile and even nicer when a reader is kind enough to send us something (especially when it's classic Eighties flicks). But that's quite enough melodrama… we do get to play the games we love day-in day-out, afterall. The films were great and had the same nostalgic effect on us, evoking memories of a time long ago, when life was simpler and happier. Darran, in particular, has fond memories of Electric Dreams and the only real downside has been that he's constantly singing the film's theme tune and driving us all crazy.

Of course, the other benefit of sending us these films is that it has given us the idea of running a feature on films which contain videogames in them, especially older ones such as these. The story of the unreleased 5200 game is also fascinating, since they had rigged up the arcade version to a television. The 5200 was indeed almost completed, but, sadly, it was never released. Still, you can find the original on MAME, although you must own the original board to play it…

SOME MORE?

Hi there,
Just discovered your mag at Issue 29. Can't believe I missed the other 28, but I guess that's life. Anyway, I called up for a subscription and then asked for a copy of all back issues available, as I didn't fancy eBay prices! Issue 27 is currently at 11 quid! I was told that only Issue 5 was available, yet the current mag (30) and the website say something completely different. Are there any other issue available?
Cheers,
Wullie

Alas, Wullie, there are no other issues available. Even we in the office have started to run out, with Issue 27 proving especially desirable and very difficult to get hold of (it must be that amazing six-page Making Of Zelda*). At Imagine we're sent a small supply of issues from the main print run, after which they're all very quickly bought up by desperate readers from all around the world. So to make sure you don't miss an issue it's best to get a subscription. Otherwise expect older issues to start rising to* Radiant Silvergun *type prices; it really is hot stuff.*



CONTACT US **Snail Mail:** Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset BH2 6EZ **Email:** retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

THE MAKING OF…

HEAD OVER HEELS

ONE OF 8-BIT GAMING'S MOST SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS, JON RITMAN AND BERNIE DRUMMOND, WENT ON TO CREATE ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR VIDEOGAME DOUBLE ACTS OF ALL TIME. JON RITMAN EXPLAINS HOW IT ALL HAPPENED.



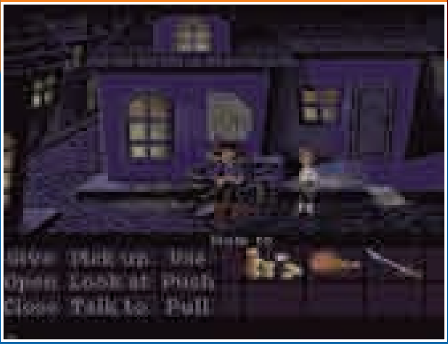
THE DEFINITIVE…

After getting grounded by pesky Galaxians, Stuart Campbell once again takes to the air to explain the history behind one of gaming's earliest scrolling shooters.



THE MAKING OF…

Ron Gilbert, the creator of one of the greatest point-and-click adventures ever made, talks *Monkey Island*, ghosts, monkeys and swashbuckling pirates.





SYSTEM 3

System 3 is responsible for some of the finest 8 and 16-bit titles ever made. Mark Cale drops by to discuss the company's past and what he has planned for the future.



GAMING'S ILLUMINATI

In the first part of our in-depth coverage of prototype machines and games, John Szczepaniak investigates the stories behind the SNES CD add on, a console by Taito and all sorts of other weird and wonderful hardware.

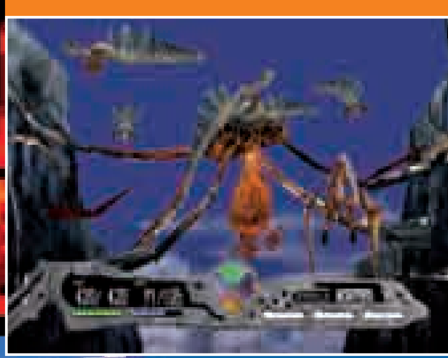


RETROINSPECTION…

SEGA SATURN Sega's 32-bit console may have been seen as the underdog to Sony's all-conquering PSone, but it actually had a staggering selection of must-have games available for it.

WHY YOU MUST PLAY

Coming out late in the Saturn's life, hardly anybody got to play Team Andromeda's RPG when it was first released. A real shame, as it's one of the greatest Saturn titles ever made.



AND THE REST…

- The Classic Game
- Back To The Eighties
- Eastern Promise
- Retro Rated
- Retro Revival
- And much, much more

ON SALE 01 FEB 2007

retro GAMER THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

LOAD 34

NEXT ISSUE

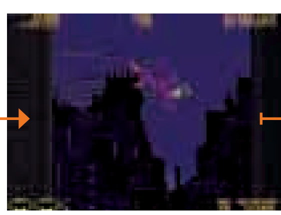


BATMAN

The 1990 game of the 1989 film was a tough challenge, but rather commendably managed to stay fairly faithful, and proved to be great fun. Playing as Gotham City's caped crusader has always been fun, but it's especially good when surrounded by mates who actually witness you one-credit clocking it.



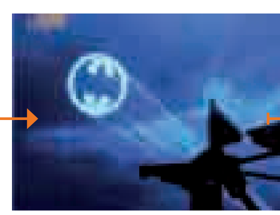
SCREEN 1
Where's Jacky going? That's right, straight to his death. It was a heated battle, especially when clad in sweaty rubber like our main hero is, but you've finally reached the climax. The Joker has been pushed to the edge and will now pay for his crimes. Pay we say, PAY!



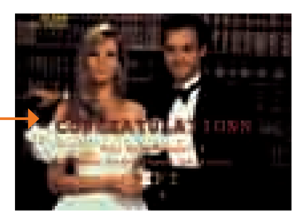
SCREEN 2
Look at the demented fool, smiling like a loon as he plummets to his doom. What do you suppose he's thinking of? Leaving the gas on? Not making enough love to enough women? That the answer is 42? Nope, he's probably thinking of ducklings in a trashbag.



SCREEN 3
Boom! And it brilliantly cuts to a digitised screen of the end of the film. Quite a clever post-modern blending of the two contrasting mediums, wouldn't you agree? Jack Nicholson, sorry, the Joker, he agrees. Look, look closer, he's nodding and smiling in agreement.



SCREEN 4
Crikey, that lighting trick beats the fireworks we normally see down Mr Wong's Chinese restaurant, any day of the week! Batman can now rest easy, knowing Gotham City is safe from criminals, at least until Batman Returns, which features Michelle Pfeiffer in a latex catsuit.



SCREEN 5
And then it cuts away to another scene from the film (though we don't quite remember this one). It's Michael Keaton looking smug with himself, and a slightly anorexic-looking Kim Basinger pouting for no apparent reason. Aye, now this was a real game ending! Not like the guff they show today.